

Homily for Easter 3, 2021

Luke 24:36-48

'A flesh and bones resurrection'

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INTRODUCTION

In his resurrection from the dead,
Our Lord Jesus was not a ghost or a spirit,

He rose ***bodily*** from the dead.

This is the big take-away from our text today.

In some ways our text follows a similar pattern to what we've heard in the other resurrection appearance scenes,

Like the one last week.

There is fear, terror, surprise, doubt, and misunderstanding, among the disciples.

There are the gracious and comforting words of the risen Lord: *'Peace be with you'*.

There is a **commission** to the disciples to be sent out to the world,
Here, it's proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name to all nations.

But it's this ***bodily*** nature of Christ's resurrection that really stands out,

that Jesus was ***touch-able*** in his resurrection.

He rose from the dead not just spiritually,
But bodily,
Physically,
Tangibly.

This has tremendous implications for our Christian faith.

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THE FISH-EATING RISEN JESUS

Notice this emphasis in the text.

The fears and doubts of the disciples arise because *'they thought they were seeing a ghost'* (24:37),
Or a spirit.

They thought this appearance in their midst, whatever it was,

Was something *immaterial*,

That is, that it did not have a physical component to it.

And who can blame them of course?

They'd never experienced anything like this before.

No one had ever experienced anything like this before!

Jesus then responds making it absolutely clear they're on the wrong track.

He says,

'Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself.

Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have' (24:39).

Yes there is something radically new which has happened,

But it's still him!

It's the crucified Lord Jesus who had nails driven through his hands and feet,
It's **him** risen from the dead.

Touch me, he says!

And so their fear begins to slowly transform into joy,
but it still seems just too good to be true,

So to really press this truth home,
that it's really him,
not a ghost or spirit,

He asks for something to eat,
And has a lovely little meal of grilled fish,

To announce and confirm his resurrection.

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THE NEED FOR TOUCH

It's worth considering briefly how this connects with our fundamental human experience.

Last year, many of you were not able to be physically with your family and friends,
Especially those who live in other states or countries.

It's been very tough for many people and still continues for some.

Instead, we resorted to technology - Facetime, Skype, Zoom, etc.

I've lost count,
Of the number of times people have said to me something like this:

*'we're very lucky to have this technology,
But it's sure not the same, as actually being **with** people'.*

I'll never forget taking my young daughter with me on a trip to my parents' house,
to drop something off at the door during the heavier restrictions.

We had talked about how we can't go in and be with nanna and pop like we normally do,

The plan was just to drop this stuff at the door, and head off.

But then, unexpectedly, we saw my mum,

And despite everything I'd said,

My little girl instinctively broke away from me,
Ran to her grandmother,
And embraced her.

Such is the intensity of the human need to be physically near to those we love,
To touch those we love.

In the resurrection of Christ Jesus,
he is not just with his disciples in a vague, nebulous way,
But he's with them **bodily**,

He invites them to **touch** him.

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RESURRECTION TEACHING

Throughout history people have struggled to know exactly what to make of the confession that Jesus was raised from the dead.

And people have claimed some *version* of what the disciples mistakenly thought on the first Easter,
that Jesus rose only in a 'spiritual way',
But not *bodily*.

Perhaps the spirit of Jesus lived on,
the 'immortality of the soul' perhaps?

Or even more vague,
That the impact of Jesus was so great that to the disciples it felt *as if* he was alive again
when they gathered together.

But we need to be clear,
This is Biblical Christian teaching.

We believe in the *bodily* resurrection of Christ.

Now to be sure,
There is something radically new and mysterious in Jesus' resurrection.

He is no longer bound and limited by space and time as we are in our humanity.

So when Jesus is alive again,
Although we're not talking about a merely 'spiritual resurrection',
Neither are we talking about mere *resuscitation*,

That's more like what happened to Lazarus.

Jesus is not merely resuscitated,
He's *resurrected*,

But he is *resurrected* bodily.

And here's one of the key reasons this is so important,

It's because a merely *spiritual* resurrection of one kind or another,
means that Jesus sort of just *survived* death in some limited sense,

his soul or spirit or impact or memory survived death and the grave,

Whereas the resurrection is not just about surviving death,

It's about Jesus **conquering** the grave,
Undoing death,

Not just for him,
But for you.

Our hope is in the resurrection of the body.

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THE BODILY PRESENCE OF JESUS TODAY

Now you may say,
That was all well and good for those first disciples,

That he appeared to them showing he had flesh and bones,

But what about us?

We haven't had that experience.

Well, two things about this.

Firstly, notice that for the disciples,

Jesus appearing wasn't *enough* for them to truly understand and have faith,

Even for them Jesus had to take them back to the **Scriptures**,
And 'open their minds'.

The Word of God is how Jesus reveals himself to us today,
How he is present with us,
And it's not entirely different from where those first disciples were at.

But more than that,
The risen Jesus **does** draw near to you physically, bodily, tangibly even today.

There is a sense in which we taste and touch his presence among us,

I'm speaking of course about the Lord's Supper.

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Think again for a moment about the events of this past year.

As many people have been prevented from being together, in the flesh,

What 's one of the big things so many people have been looking forward to?

Sharing a meal together.

Your risen Lord is with you bodily in this meal of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord Jesus chooses to be present with us through physical, tangible means,
We receive his body and blood with the bread and wine.

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CONCLUSION

He's not a ghost or a spirit,
He rose bodily from the dead.

Death has been defeated!

So come to this feast today,

Where your crucified and risen Lord Jesus promises to be present to you as close as he was
to those first disciples,

bringing forgiveness, life and salvation.

God grant it to us for Jesus' sake, Amen.