

Scripture

Luke 24:36b-48

Meditation

*Righteous Fright*

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Please join me in prayer.

Hide me in your glory, gracious and loving God. And may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, my redeemer, and my refuge. Amen.

Today's passage is another movielike scene. Imagine the disciples gathered, scared, grieving and perplexed on what just happened and what is happening. I can imagine that they were comforting each other, they might also be processing the recent events that have unfolded. In the past few days, they witnessed the brutal killing of Jesus, and then they heard news about the sightings of the risen Christ. Mary Magdalene in the garden, and the news about the encounter on the road to Emmaus. Put yourself in their shoes, how would you feel? Then, in an instant, Jesus is in the midst of them. It must have been very terrifying for them. How can this be happening? I personally find Jesus' first words very appropriate, because he understood how his disciples were feeling. Jesus has been with them and he understood how they feel in different circumstances. Verses 38-40 showed his intimate relationship with them. Jesus knew that they were terrified and doubting his presence. And in a gesture to comfort them, he asked them if there was anything to eat – this is maybe something that he has asked them many times in their time together. Other than being hungry, Jesus wants to assure the disciples that he is the Jesus that spent time with them and was doing ministries with them.

Then, he went on and explain to the disciples what happened and why it needed to happen. As usual, the disciples are all over the place in terms of them understanding the life and ministry of Jesus. It was important for Jesus to make them see the intersectionality of the laws that they understand and embrace, and his mission to the word. If we are to analyze this situation, Jesus came to the disciples where they are. First point is when he appeared to them where they were gathering. He did not send a messenger to call for them. Second point is when he emphasized on the of the intersection of their tradition – the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms, and the events that unfolded as stated in verse 44. In my evangelism class, my professor told us that effective evangelism and missioning is meeting people where they are. This reminded me of two parables – and the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:3-6 where the shepherd secured the 99 sheep, then looked for the missing one, and the parable of the lost coin in Luke 15:8-10 where the woman swept the house and lighted the lamp to find the lost coin. In both cases, the woman and the shepherd did their best to find their missing valuables. A concept that is contradictory to the older version of evangelism – where people are invited into the church or becoming a member of a religious group. This, too, is the concept that was adapted from the notion – 'Build it and they will come'. Surely, this was effective many years ago, but apparently this was not sustainable. My question is this, are we willing to meet people where they are? If we are, up to what cost?

Another important point that I saw in this passage was that after Jesus met the disciples where they were, he led them to the place where he was, but he did this not on a forceful manner, but he gently led the way for the disciples to come to where he is. We see this in verses 45-47, then towards the end, he reminded them of the significant part that they played. Jesus provided comfort to his perplexed, grieving and anxious friends, which totally made sense because as usual, this is

what the disciples needed. These are the answers that they were looking for in order for them to understand and go on with the ministries that they felt like it had to end because of the events in the past couple of days. Not to mention that they, too, are scared that they might end up like Jesus. How would you feel if you were in the shoes of the disciples? But the passage did mention that there was joy and disbelief with what they are witnessing.

The other important element that I want to invite you to look closely is the fear that the disciples felt when they saw Jesus. Fear is a natural human tendency. In times of uncertainties, it is okay to feel frightened because it takes us to places that takes us out of our comfort zone, a place where we do not have control of. For the disciples, the fear that they felt was overwhelming because after the days of travelling and doing ministry with Jesus, they were not sure how to move on. Plus, the fact that the fear that death may come upon them is hanging in the air, one can almost feel its palpability. But in the fear that the disciples felt, there was hope for them. Jesus gave them the hope in the grief that they are feeling. Jesus assured them that what is happening before them is what the prophets foretold. That even though Jesus felt the excruciating pain of his death, it needed to happen because this is how God's power will be displayed. That God's power is great and unfathomable that it is greater than human death. Although for me, it may sound a little problematic that a loving God can will this brutality to happen. But Jesus himself said that this whole event was for one main purpose only, and that is to fulfill what the prophets foretold. That this is not something that will happen again to anyone.

The narrative of the risen Christ appearing to the disciples is an assurance that he lives and to teach them to set aside the fear that they are currently engulfed with. And to make them understand God's grand plan for humanity and to commission them to be witnesses of what God has to offer, done and doing for the world. In our present time, we can see the parallelisms from the fear that the disciples felt. Aside from the pandemic that overwhelmed us in so many ways that we have ever imagined. From the year before, we still hear how our health care is still repulsed in different parts of the world, people are still dying, government leaders are still trying their best to cope with our current situation. Sometimes it looked and feel sufficient, other times, we feel helpless. We are in a middle of witnessing a former police officer's trial because he knelt on a neck of a black person's neck that led to the death of the said person. Last Sunday, we heard about a policewoman shooting and killing another black person, with the excuse of thinking that the gun was a taser. Really? Does a gun and taser looked the same? Then we see the aftermath of this senseless killing. Vulnerable people are once again facing challenges that exponentially rose. There are reasons to be scared. There are a lot of reasons to be overwhelmed with what is happening around us. As a person of color, I try my best to lead, only to end up feeling insufficient.

In closing, I would like to post challenges that our passages is calling for us to reflect and hopefully take action: What and where in our circles need the presence of the risen Christ? What kinds of experiences and understandings do we need so that we can become credible witnesses to God's aims in the world? Are we credible witnesses to God's aims in the world? How should we respond to God's presence and work in the world? And finally, how do we participate in God's work to the world – the humanity and God's creation?

May it be so. Amen.