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# The Third Sunday of Easter

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**Luke 24**



Here's how my Sunday morning conversation with Addie goes: *Addie, daddy is about to go to church. Addie church, Addie church. Addie, who do you want to see at church? Eena and Weed. Is there anything you want to do while you are at church? Eat, eat, Addie eat.* Although she is a priest's kid, I'm fairly confident she's not talking about consuming Holy Communion. She's thinking of the coffee cake, and the cookies, and the goldfish, and the apple juice at coffee hour. Church is a place she brings her hunger.

Some of us are here this morning simply tired. Or we're here because our spouse dragged us. Or maybe we are still unsure of this whole faith thing; we heard the resurrection story a couple of weeks ago, and we've decided to linger to see if there is anything to it. Some of us are looking for some kind of wisdom that we just aren't finding in the world. Some of us are looking to see if God will give us a second chance. There are as many reasons for being here as there are us gathered. But I think we are all hungry.

We're all hungering for something, some nourishment, some word, some encounter, some recognition, some touch. Just because most of us can afford putting food on the table every night, let's not deny that we're hungry. If for nothing else, then at least let us say that we're hungry for peace.

It's important to remember that we aren't the only ones who are hungry. God is. Just a few weeks after he's raised from the dead, Jesus is depleted. Apparently, it takes a lot out of you to come back from the grave. The Resurrected One is Hungry. Thankfully Jesus doesn't just barge in on us. First, he says Peace Be With You. This is an important greeting for us to attend to. No one expected him to say Peace. Not least those disciples.

Remember, the disciples were not exactly stand-up friends during Holy Week – it seemed like at every turn they were either falling asleep or running away. You know what they were hungry for: security. Their own security. We too know about the hunger for security, don't we? National security, financial security, job security, home security – we go to extreme lengths in search of security. You'll know that the Savior was never known as the Prince of Security, but of Peace. Let's not confuse those two. For starters, security wants safety; peace is intimate, and intimacy is risky.

Feel the Intimacy of Christ's words: Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see.

Peace is a notoriously hard word to define. Look it up in the dictionary and it says peace is the absence of conflict. But that feels too much to me like the avoidance of conflict. And the Body of Jesus, the Body of Peace, bears the wounds of the world's conflict. Sadly, we don't get to hear Jesus waxing on the subject of Peace. Instead, we get a curious request for food.

At one level, Luke wants us to see that Jesus was not a ghost; that is, he isn't still dead. That's the obvious point. But I think there is more going on. Imagine this story was the only story you had about the Resurrected Christ. This was all you knew about his post-death activity. Surely, there would be some cognitive dissonance seeing the Prince of Peace, their Redeemer now alive in God, in their midst scarred and hungry. Who is this Jesus?

We all have our image of Jesus, who we think he is, who we think he should be. Some see him as Great Social Reformer. Others see him as the Atoning Sacrifice. Others see him as a winsome Spiritual Example. Still others see him as a Mystical Teacher. Who is Jesus? Maybe he is the One in our midst who offers us peace, even as he hungers for our nourishment.

Maybe that's the question of this text: how do we nourish this Christ among us; this Christ who stands in our midst and asks to be fed?

Let me ask: have you ever thought about prayer as just this chance to nourish the Christ who dwells in your soul? Christians from the Eastern Orthodox tradition nourish Christ within by saying the name of Jesus over and over, in rhythm with their breathing. Simply saying his name, giving attention to the One who lives in us, amplifies his being, his presence. Church: Christ lives in you. And he hungers for your attention and presence.

This doesn't have to be elaborate. Notice in our text that Jesus doesn't come into our midst with a ready-made order. He's not picky about what we give him. Have you anything here? Any part of us. But we must give it. Hand it over. If you want to know what to give him: start with your doubt, your fear; no, start with your hunger. Start with that area of your life where you feel uncertain, insecure.

Christ comes to be with his disciples, offering them his peace, even as he asks for them to feed him. The Risen One is present not just with his disciples, however. And he is not present as a ghost. He is present in flesh and blood. Our hungry God is present anywhere, anyone is asking for a meal. Forgive the obvious point. We are called to nourish the Christ in the wearied, in the hungry. Even in a materially advanced country like ours, Christ still looks for food. One in eight families in our country face food insecurity. The numbers are higher for families with children – 1 in 6.

I know a lot of people who don't believe in the divine power of Jesus; they've never seen him; never experienced him. I know a lot of Episcopalians who are totally unclear of what to make of Jesus, not least his Resurrection. We are okay with God, and okay with the Holy Spirit, sort of, but Jesus. And I guess anyone on the fence with faith, I'd just say: introduce yourself to the poor, and to the hungry, and to the insecure – that's where our our hungry God resides.

We don't think about the hungry and the poor as Christ. No, we think of the helpers as Christ. Not so in Luke 24. Christ is in the hungry, not the helper. We don't serve others because we are exceptionally generous and selfless people. We gather cheerios. We collect tuna. We drive groceries into the city. Because we need to nourish Jesus. If we don't, it is we who walk away hungry, still hungry for His peace.

Well, after Jesus scarfs down the fish, he takes his disciples into a little Bible Study session, where he unpacks the entire Hebrew Bible. This sounds like it might have been quite the doozy of a Bible study. But, Luke tells us, it all boils down to seeing his death and resurrection on every page of scripture. The text doesn't say what exactly he was teaching them, the exact lessons he drew out. But I wonder if he was opening their minds how God has always been leading God's people into futures bigger than they could ever secure for themselves. He pulled them from slavery. Out of Egypt. And then out of exile. Always pulling them out of tombs into newer life.

Isn't that a lesson we need, too? So often security is the illusion of having a Swiss vault with your future kept safe in it. Over time you become so anxious and fearful, that it becomes your own soul that gets locked away. What protects you in the beginning can ultimately become your jailer. It can become the stone rolled over your grave. Not so with peace. For peace receives the future as a gift, as an adventure. Peace greets the future openly, expectantly, as if the future is a friend, a friend that, say, has just come back from the dead.

I wonder if that is your relationship to your future. No, no - the future does not promise you financial security. Who knows what the markets will do? Any one of us could be out everything tomorrow. The future doesn't promise you security of health. Who knows what our bodies will do? Any one of us might be dead by the end of the week. The future isn't full of guarantees. It is full of holiness, holy moments of encounter. It will come to us with its needs and its hungers, yes; it will also come to us as the one who has peered over the rim of death and returned to give us his one-word synopsis: Peace.

But there is only one way to know that peace – through death and resurrection. Our deep attachment, our hunger for more and more security for our lives and our futures, needs to die. We need to die to the voices that say, “more, more protection; more security; more anxiety and fear.” We need to die to the voices that tell us that busyness is better than prayer; to the voices that distract us from hearing the cries of the hungry. We need those voices to die, so that we can attend to the Holy One in our midst who says, “Peace” – so that his peace can rise in our hearts, that our lives become holy nourishment for our hungry world.