

Sermon by the Rev'd Timothy J. Hallett
Luke 24:36-48
15 April 2018, Easter 3B

Today we have another appearance of the risen Christ. And like other accounts of his appearance, this one is not quite what we'd expect. If we were staging these things, there'd be a loud crack, a flash of light, a big poof of smoke, and a "Ta da! I'm here!" But Jesus doesn't do it that way. He's just there, usually unrecognized at first, then mistaken for someone or something else, only finally discerned and known. It seems like the disciples aren't always sure they're glad to see him--remember, they're deserters. Then, while they're goggling in confusion and fear, Jesus says something that seems inappropriate or understated to say the least, or maybe even tongue-in-cheek. Like "Peace," or "Why are you frightened?" or "Got anything to eat?" He's clearly having fun with this. And then he sends. Sends people to do the work they thought had ended with his death: the work of healing, feeding, forgiving, reconciling: changing the world.

So the Easter victory happens among people who are weak, guilty, afraid, disappointed; among people who skulk and cower and withdraw; among confused, uncertain, doubtful people: There are the fearful women on Easter morning; the sequestered men in the evening. There's doubting Thomas and today's startled, frightened, disbelieving little group. And they'll all continue to fear and doubt and hide sometimes. But something has happened, something that happened once for all, yet happens again and again. They know now that their relationship with Jesus is not over; they know that his work hasn't ended; and they know that they have to carry it on, act it out. It's their job now.

So Easter happened to people like us--people with shaky credentials, halting,

faltering, muddled, troubled people; people who don't know what to make of events, what to make of their lives; people who know how to fear, how to hide, how to doubt, how to sin.

And if Easter happened to people like us, it can happen to us too, and does, a sort of ongoing fait accompli. Again and again it happens, unexpectedly, quietly, sometimes frighteningly. Often it takes us a while to recognize it, identify it: a startling outbreak of peace, of confidence that makes you doubt your doubts, of forgiveness smashing guilt, love consuming hatred, courage stalking fear, joy subverting sadness, life overwhelming death. That's when we know the power of Jesus' resurrection, know that every bond is broken but our bond to him, know that his life and death is a matter of life and death and that our own life depends on his, is given and received always new in his. Always new.

And then, just like he did with his friends long ago, he reminds us: This is for us, all this fullness. But not only for us. It's for everybody, for all the world. It has happened for us, to us, so that it can happen to them, through us. There are too many who don't know it's happened at all, whose lives are lived only in doubt and fear and hiding and pain, who know nothing about faith or hope or love, nothing of peace. And they won't know anything about them if we don't make them real, make them present. And so he sends us to be witnesses of these things. You are witnesses of these things. None of us is exempt; we don't get excused from this; there are no frozen chosen. Even nice, reserved, introverted Lutherans and Episcopalians are not exempt. Even Episcopalians and Lutherans got to do some witnessing and testifying, got to tell what we've known and share what we've received--healings, feedings, strengths, loves, joys--that repentance,

transformation, forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning here and now: beginning always here and now.

For starters, let's have something to eat, for strength, for energy. Jesus never asked anybody to work on an empty stomach. "Got anything to eat?" Do we ever. Have some food. It's the bread of life, you know. Dig in. Then roll up your sleeves, get out of here and get to work.

You are witnesses of these things.

St. Thomas, 2018

Timothy J. Hallett