April 14, 2024 **CHRIST AMONG US**

The New Testament records ten different resurrection appearances of Jesus. Today we are going to look at one of the most captivating, a story only found in the gospel of Luke chapter 24. Luke is famous for the way he uses the role of walking and traveling to share the fundamental truths of the Gospel of Jesus. Much of Luke’s Gospel from chapter nine onwards centers around Jesus’ walking towards Jerusalem.

In the world we live in today, we can identify a lot with those disciples of Jesus after His resurrection. It is interesting how the lectionary texts seem to always manage to address current issues? Fear: If there was a common theme between all the doors that we hide behind (from both the past and the present), then it seems that it would have to be fear. Is our fear creating distance between who we are and who God wants us to be? In our life isolation and fear create distance.

This Sunday's Gospel lesson St. Luke 24: 36-48, is about Jesus appearing to the fearful disciples and saying to them Peace be with you! After the death of Jesus Christ, the life story of the disciples was filled with fear. Luke writes about their confusion, doubt, and uncertainty. In chapter 24 the first part is all about disappointment and disillusionment. Have you ever noticed that some of the saddest words in the English language begin with the letter D? For example, disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, despair, and death.

But chapter 24 is also a story about faith and reality. Jesus appeared to the disciples and spoke about how the prophecy of Moses, Prophets and other Scriptures references were fulfilled in his death and resurrection. It is about God's Word, new revelation, and new insights. It is about hospitality and the power of breaking bread. It is about evangelism and mankind being rescued, redeemed, and restored into God's Image. Most importantly it is a story all about our Savior and Lord - Jesus Christ. It is easy to read this chapter 24 and get caught up in all the side issues that are going on. We don't understand why the disciples can't see that it is Jesus - the Risen Lord. We don't understand when Jesus begins to share with them all those Old Testament passages why they didn't stop and ask Him how it is that He knows so much about the Messiah and the Old Testament?

I think Luke shares with us the story of Jesus' resurrection, because it contains in just a few verses all the things that he wanted to share in his telling Jesus' Story. We know that for years Luke was a co-worker of the Apostle Paul. During that time Luke had heard repeatedly Paul preaching and teaching about the greatness of Jesus' Resurrection. There was nothing more important than the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and that Jesus has made a way for all people to be rescued, redeemed, and restored once again to the Image of God. I believe that behind Luke's writings and especially our passage today is this fundamental belief in Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension.

For Luke, Jesus' Resurrection was no mere faith statement. Jesus' material (bodily) Resurrection was the foundational stone of his faith. A faith that he discovered was supported by ancient scriptures beginning with Moses and continuing through the Prophets.

In this passage we see that the disciples of Jesus have lost their focus. They were confused and weary. They need a break. They have been through so much. They had seen their Master crucified on a cross. They had invested everything they had into following Jesus for three years of their lives. When they saw Jesus nailed between two thieves, it was as if everything they had worked for was useless and without meaning.

If you would like to know more about the resurrected power of Jesus, please join us in our worship at 11:00 AM on Sundays.

Peace!

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj

Minister

West Center Congregational Church

101 Pondfield Road West

Bronxville, NY 10708