

Sunday, April 28: Luke 24

Vs 1-12, The women come searching for Jesus' body to complete his burial ritual with ointments and spices. They were perplexed, perhaps at first they thought his body had been stolen, but then the angelic messengers explain what's happened. The text does not explicitly call them angels, but their dazzling clothes and the women's response to their presence (were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground) indicate that these are "divine messengers" aka. "angels." Mary, the Mother of James, is the Mother of Jesus. One of Jesus' little brother's was James, who later went on to become the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. This Mary had already met an angel in her lifetime (Gabriel at the annunciation), so she knew one when she saw one. "Remember how he told you?" This is a classic formula in Judaic theology, Israel is often called to "remember" how God acted, what God did and said, the covenant God made. In this case, the angels simply ask the women to recall the times Jesus told them all that this would happen (9:22, 43-45, 12:50, 13:33, 18: 31-34), that he would die, but also that he would be raised on the third day. The women went to share what they had heard from the angels with the rest of the disciples, but it seemed to them to be an "idle tale." This word in Greek is "leros," which is the root of our English word "delirious." It means total and utter *baloney*. There was no doubt amongst them, they flat out did not believe their story. But, Peter was curious enough to go and check out what they did see. It's frustrating to think that they weren't believed until their story was investigated and checked out by a man, but Peter doesn't even see what they saw, for the angels had disappeared by the time Peter showed up.

Vs 13-35, Two of Jesus' other disciples (not apostles, but followers of Jesus), one whose name was Cleopas, were walking from Jerusalem home to Emmaus (7 miles away), discussing the events of Holy Week. This is the first appearance of the Risen Christ in Luke's gospel, but these disciples do not yet recognize Jesus. They say that Jesus was "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people," and that they had hoped he would redeem Israel. They are utterly disappointed and disheartened. But they also share with Jesus what the women had seen and heard, and what Peter had seen. They still did not say that they believed, however. Jesus chastises them "Oh how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared!" He then opens up all of the scriptures that pointed to what happened to him during Holy Week. "Was it not necessary" denotes God's divine will/plan.

It was dangerous to travel alone in this time, hospitality was society's most important virtue, so the two urge Jesus to stay with them and have dinner with them. Jesus "took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" this is the same pattern they would have witnessed at many meals before (the feeding of the 5000, the Last Supper, etc). It was in this act –the breaking of the bread- that they recognized Jesus. He then vanished before their eyes. They barely finished their suppers before racing all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the others that they had SEEN JESUS in the flesh.

Vs 36-53, Just then, Jesus himself stood among them. Christ's body tells us something about our resurrected bodies. We will be recognizable, we will have scars but not pain, we will be hungry and able to eat and drink (we'd better since heaven is a feast!), but our glorified bodies will have powers that our mortal bodies do not (appearing in a locked room). At first they thought that Jesus was a ghost, but Jesus proves to them that he's in the flesh by the wounds on his hands and feet. He encourages them to touch him and see the truth. Even with Jesus standing right in front of them, some of them were still disbelieving! Talk about "slow of heart"! Jesus' eating was the proof they needed to see it was truly him. Jesus loved to eat! (remember how they called him a glutton and a drunkard in his lifetime?) It was in the breaking of the bread that Cleopas and friend had recognized him, and now it's in the eating of the broiled fish that the rest of the disciples recognize and believe that he has truly risen from the dead. Then Jesus taught them what he had taught Cleopas and friend on the road to Emmaus –that he is the suffering Messiah, long written about in scripture. To be the Messiah is to suffer and die and rise, and repentance and forgiveness of sins is available through his name to ALL people (all nations is code for EVERYONE). The disciples are commissioned as witnesses, they're the ones who have the story to tell and who have seen Christ in the flesh. This is what it means to be a disciple: to tell others what you've seen God do. Jesus then promises them the Holy Spirit and urges them to stay in Jerusalem to receive it.

The timeline is a little messed up at the end of Luke's gospel. It appears that Jesus says and does all this stuff on the very same day as the resurrection, and then ascends later that evening. But, we know from other accounts (including Acts, the sequel to Luke's gospel), that Jesus actually appeared to and taught his disciples for 40 days after the resurrection, and then on day 50 (Pentecost), the disciples received the Holy Spirit.
