

Schooling the Disciples

Luke 24:36-53, Acts 2:1-4 NRSV by Patty Friesen Pentecost (June 9/19)

Sing: Jesus Stand Among Us before scripture.

Today we are going to do one of my favourite methods of bible study which is using the Chiasm - the working with a passage from the outside verses to the inside verses to find the heart and meaning of the passage in the middle verses. It is a delight to find the parallels and the brilliance of the scripture writers in this practice. We will look at Luke 24 in our bulletins. This story is just before the walk to Emmaus where the disciples recognize Jesus when he eats with them so the disciples are talking about Jesus' appearance to them in Emmaus when Jesus appears to them again in Jerusalem verse 36-37 and said Peace be with you. They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

Verse 52-53 they are back in Jerusalem with great joy celebrating the risen Christ when previously they had been in Jerusalem behind locked doors in fear. Something powerful has happened to move the disciples from terror to joy. Let's look and see...

Verse 38-39 Jesus said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." The gospel of John has doubting Thomas as the only one who had to touch Jesus wounds to believe but Luke says they all had doubts and had to touch Jesus' hands to believe.

We parallel this interaction between Jesus and the disciples with verse 50-51 where he interacts with them again leading them and lifting up his hands again to show

them the nail prints in his palms, proof of crucifixion and he blessed them with peace as he had when he appeared in verse 36 and was carried to heaven as he had appeared from heaven in verse 38. Yummy.

Back to the proof of the resurrection in verse 40 And when Jesus had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. Let's parallel this with verse 48 when Jesus says, You are my witnesses of these things, meaning, because you have seen my wounds and touched them - you know I've risen. You are now responsible since you have seen and touched.

Verse 41: While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering...I love this because it means we can still wonder and disbelieve and still have joy when we don't quite understand everything about the resurrection. This is exactly the wondering and disbelief the disciples walking to Emmaus experienced when they told the stranger, "we don't know what to think. Jesus said he was the Messiah but then was crucified like a common criminal." At that point on the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained the scriptures from Moses to the prophets that Jesus died and rose in power for all nations and the disciples minds were opened to the scriptures.

In the same way, in verse 44/45 - Jesus' response to the disbelieving and wondering is to remind them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you - that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Now we're getting to the heart of the Chiasm - verse 42/43. They have him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate it in their presence. This is the heart of the matter - Jesus' eating with them as he did so many times before in their journeys together and at the feeding of the 5000 and at the Last Supper and in Emmaus and on the beach with the charcoal fire last week. The proof is in the pudding or in the broiled fish. Ghosts can't eat. Jesus had Jairus' daughter eat after she was raised and when Peter raised Dorcas, he had her eat. The proof is in the eating. Acts 10:24 describes the eyewitnesses of the resurrection as those who ate and drank with Jesus after he rose from the dead. From fear to eating with the risen Christ and receiving his blessing of peace to joy and praising God continually in the temple - the disciples are in a ready open posture to receive the ongoing presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Last Sunday we talked about the three ways God works in the world - through the miraculous unexplainable in-breaking from beyond. We also learned the second way God works is by collaboration with us and Jesus needed the disciples to trust him enough to actually cast their nets on the other side of the boat in order to make the miracle happen. The third way God offers us help in history is simply the power to endure what cannot be changed and to allow the change to take place within us for strength and peace and new perspective on the difficulty.

In the words of Thomas Keating, "This presence is so immense, yet so humble; awe-inspiring yet so gentle; limitless yet so intimate; tender and personal. We know that we are known. Everything in our lives is transparent in the Presence. It knows everything about us - all our weaknesses, brokenness, sinfulness - and still loves us infinitely. This Presence is healing, strengthening, refreshing - just by it's presence. It

is nonjudgemental, self-giving, seeking no reward, boundless in compassion. It is like coming home to a place we never should have left, to be awareness that it was somehow always there, but which we did not recognize. (Open Mind, Open Heart)

We celebrate the presence of the risen Christ with us who continues to eat with us and gives us strength to endure. There are bits of gluten-free bread to eat as well as fish crackers. You can take one or the other and hold onto them and we'll eat together and then we'll pass the grape juice and drink together. I invite the deacons to come forward to serve. Communion prayer:

Gracious God, God of power and might: when you sent forth your Spirit, we were created; when we falter, you recreate us. We give you thanks for life and breath. We praise you for your indwelling presence. Come now, Holy Spirit, Breath of God, blow over us; take away the chaos and tiredness of our lives. Move within us. Renew us, we pray in the name of Jesus, our risen Lord. Amen.