

Reading: Luke 24:36-48 (NT page 1062)

Background to the reading

In our reading this morning there is a few aspects that we need to understand in order to grasp the full meaning.

The people of the first Mediterranean world were superstitious and believed in the existence of supernatural beings. But they were realistic in the sense that they knew supernatural beings could nae eat and have a real body with flesh and bones! So just imagine yourself living in this world, talking and going on with life and all of a sudden someone appears in your midst saying “Peace be with you! – nae wonder they thought Jesus was a ghost or a spirit as it literally says in the Greek text.

But Jesus assures them that he is not a Spirit by proving to them that He is real. He tells them to come closer and inspect His hands and feet – yes even touch Him. Some victims were tied onto crosses; others were nailed on. The nails would have been driven through the wrists (which could be called part of the hand). A nail through the ankles may not have been common, but there was nothing to have kept soldiers from doing it. Maybe this happened to Jesus too.

But they still did not believe that it was the resurrected Jesus. So Jesus asked them for something to eat. In most Jewish traditions, “Spirits” did not eat earthly food. So when Jesus says that He wants to eat and eat the staple food of their time – there could have been no more doubt that He is the resurrected One!

Then Jesus explained to them that His coming were predicted in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. The Old Testament were divided into three parts namely the Law, the prophets and the Wisdom literature while Jesus mentions the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms in verse 44. Jewish interpreters sometimes spoke of God “opening their eyes” to his truths, while Jesus “opened their minds” so that they could understand His true mission. He explained to them that The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

And then Jesus reminded them of their true mission as His followers. They must be witnesses of these things. They must live what He taught them. They must preach of His love, forgiveness and mercy for the sinner. They must convey the hope of His resurrection everywhere they go.

Sermon

The text verse for the sermon is verse 48:"⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things."

We have received the command to be witnesses of what has happened to Jesus Christ. Our lives of faith must reflect what He has done on earth namely to include all the marginalized of our society, to take care of the sick, to be peacemakers, to love and to walk the extra mile. Why? Well because it is only then that we will be able to be witnesses on earth of His love, hope, mercy and forgiveness. It is only then when we bring peace instead of hatred that we will be able to make a difference everywhere we go. It is only when we include rather than exclude that people will feel the loving presence of our Lord and Saviour. It is only when we speak of hope of our real and true destiny that the world will stand still and listen – albeit only for a wee while. It is when we make time for the stranger and walk the extra mile that our villages will experience the impact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is amazing to see this in practise. I have seen it at the Cozy Kaff when people ask: Is this free? And why do you do it? The answer: "because we care" usually creates quite a surprise on the faces of

people. Why? Well because it seems as if we live in a world where no one cares about anyone else. It seems as if our world and society dictates individualism to the extreme, where the only one that really matters is YOU!

Our lives of being witnesses of Jesus' Gospel is a journey of many ups and downs. It is a journey of many choices where we either are witnesses or not. And it will depend on how focussed we are. If we follow Jesus Christ as the Only way to God the Father with the help of His Holy Spirit, then we will know how important it is to "touch" Him, by ways of speaking. And to be able to "touch" him, we will have to make time to spend in His presence. We will have to talk to Him in prayer and adhere to His command to love unconditionally. And we need to live a life of forgiveness and mercy to those who injure us in many ways.

And so by the way if you think but how on earth can I be a witness, how can I convey the Gospel of Jesus Christ to other people, then think of a ghostly story that you have heard and that you perhaps like to retell every time you have the chance. If you can retell a story of a "spooky" experience, surely you will be able to the same with the Gospel of Jesus Christ without suggesting that the Gospel of

Jesus Christ is only a “spooky story” . Imagine the impact we will have on any audience especially on a “supposedly” superstitious day like Friday the 13th , while other people tell their spook stories - we tell them of Jesus Christ who appeared all of a sudden in the midst of the disciples and how they thought He was a “ghost”. Imagine if you tell the story as follows:

One day a long time ago, 11 men were blethering away about their friend that have died tragically when suddenly out of nowhere there appeared this figure. They screamed and tried to run away but the door was locked and they could nae get out. They thought this was it- the end of their lives. But while they were running and screaming the figure spoke to them and told them not to be afraid. They got more frightened because the voice of this “ghost” was the same voice of their friend that have died a few days ago. They only had one thought and that was to get away as soon as possible. Some of them started to use force to open the door while others just froze. And to make matters worse all of a sudden this “figure” said to them that they must touch him because He is the friend that have recently died. Suddenly the whole room fell silent. No-one dared to go near. And then this “ghost” ordered the same favourite food of their friend. They were now convinced He was nae a ghost. It was their friend who came back to life. Jesus was not dead but alive!

I am sure that you will attract the attention of any audience – even those who do not believe at all.

May we never ever stop talking about what happened to our Lord and saviour in everything we do!

Amen

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