

Luke 24:36-50  
April 18, 2021

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I have a problem, who doesn't right? My human brokenness is that sometimes, in conversation, I find myself turning things back to me – my wants, my needs, me, me, me. Please do not hear me wrong, there are indeed times we need to stand up for ourselves, seek help, and give voice to whatever it is going on in our life that may be troubling us, leaving us in fear, or a state in which we feel stuck, lost, alone and with nowhere to turn. It is OK to make it about us in situations such as this. Yet, what I am hinting at is that often I fail to listen to others; especially, at times those closest to me. Maybe it is my fear of not being able to help or resolve an issue so it is just easier to turn the conversation back to something I can control -- talking about me. Maybe it is moments of silence in a conversation where instead of asking, "Tell me about your day" or "Share that experience with me" or "I hear you say (whatever it is), help me understand that better" it is just easier to turn the focus back around to me. I find that to be the case with many difficult topics we encounter daily.

I also find it all too easy to take a text, such as the one before us today, and immediately place the focus on us. As I often do each week, I will go back and review past sermons on a particular text. What was going on in the world when I wrote that one? What was the focus? What message did I hope to get across? Well, this week in reviewing some of those past sermons I saw a repeated theme, which centered around verse 48, "You are witnesses of these things." Again, do not hear my dismissal of the importance of our giving testimony to the resurrected Christ in the world. It is what Jesus commissions us to do. As commentary from *The New Interpreter's Bible* reminds us, "The experience of the presence of the risen Lord led the disciples to see that he had been raised, and the experience of the individual believer and the community of believers is still the foundation of faith. Where the Lord's physical hands and feet are no longer present, the ministry of the hands of countless saints in simple and sincere ministries continues to bear witness to the Lord's living presence."<sup>i</sup>

Before we can witness, be the Lord's physical hands and feet, we must experience the presence of the risen Lord, which is the foundation of our faith. So, before we can jump to our role in witnessing, the focus as any Christian message should be is on experiencing Jesus. Seeing who he is. Hearing what God is doing through him. And when I went back and looked at this text, which in the past, has focused more on what we are called to do, I became enamored with a passage that may not always been one of my so-called "favorite" passages of the Bible. Not that I disliked this passage; however, it was not one I would pull out of my so-called toolbox of treasured and sacred words from God to deliver to the beloved saints of God in whatever they may be experiencing. You all know the ones: Psalm 23, John 3:16-17; Isaiah 40:31; Jeremiah 29:11; Philippians 4:13 or Proverbs 3:5 just to name a few. However, this week Luke 24:36-50 worked its way to the top.

What caught my attention, drew me in, open my mind, is the activity of the risen Jesus. We know death could not contain him but in this post-resurrection narrative Luke so beautifully gives witness to our risen Lord and Savior continuing his work of coming to the disciples in their moment of need. He stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you." He showed them his hands and feet. He revealed to them he is truly alive. He ate with them. He taught them. He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He equipped them to move beyond their fear and disbelief letting it not control them and hinder his commission to them to be witnesses of these things. And he was not done as he sent them to proclaim their experience with him. He promised them he would send the Spirit to be upon them. He assured them they would be clothed with power from on high. Finally, he blessed them.

Wow! What a passage. When you thought Jesus had done it all in dying and rising, he assures the disciples and us he is not done yet. Perhaps Luke finishes Mark's abrupt ending we heard on Easter with no post-resurrection appearance and assists the disciples and the church in where and how we experience the presence of the risen Lord. How it is we are equipped or clothed with the power on high to be witnesses of these things. If you look at what Jesus does in this passage, it sure is reminiscent of what Jesus does when the church gathers for worship. He comes to us and says, "Peace be with you." He proclaims repentance and forgiveness of

sins to all. He meets us in the sacred meal. He opens our minds through the reading of God's word. He calms our fears and doubts that may arise in our hearts. He shows us his hands and feet, who he is, what he has done for us and the world. He sends us out to go and tell the good news. But before that, the beloved saints are blessed with the assurance of God's watchful eye, grace, mercy, light for our way, and God's favor. We truly are clothed with the power from on high! If that is not worth jumping for joy, waving our hands in the air, dancing, and shouting, "Alleluia!" "Thanks be to God." "Praise the Lord!" Then, I am not sure what is.

As I prayed this week, the Lord told me to say, "Thank you!" Thank you, beloved saints, who have been clothed from on high, for all you have done amidst the challenges of the past year. The Lord knows it has not been easy. The Lord knows there have been moments of exhaustion, fear, and anxiety. The Lord knows we have wrestled with how to be church and witness all the things the Lord has done for us. The Lord knows ... and the Lord says, "Thank you!" For all you have done in giving witness to the great love of God and continuing to be the hands and feet that bear witness to the Lord's living presence. Thank you for your ongoing commitment, faithfulness, and support of the work we do together in the name of Jesus Christ. The Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace!

With that said, the Lord also knows our work is not done. There remains much suffering, injustice and innocent lives that continue to be lost. Black, Latino, Asian, LGBTQIA voices that are silenced. The Lord knows there are voices that have not found the courage to speak up, stand with, and disrupt internalized, interpersonal, systemic, and structural racism. I find my voice to be one of them.

The Lord knows the world's brokenness and the Lord promises and continues to shine light, hope, and bring joy into this world. The Lord continues to commission and send the church through the ministry of the hands of countless saints in simple and sincere ministries after the resurrected Jesus has first come to us, fed us, taught us, equipped us, saved us, forgiven us, clothed us with power from on high, to give us the courage and strength to be witnesses of these things. You are loved! You are blessed. We have all we need to do this work Jesus has sent us to

do. We have the assurance because he lives, and he is active in the world and among us. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> *The New Interpreter's Bible*; Volume IX Luke and John; 1995 Abingdon Press; p.490.