

## Pastor's Devotional for April 8, 2018

### Read Luke 24:36-49

The doors were locked as Jesus' disciples compared their bizarre experiences, having glimpsed their crucified leader as if he were still alive (John 20:19). They were "startled and frightened" when Jesus somehow appeared in their midst. God was re-writing the laws of nature! Scary as it was, Jesus first words of peace assured his disciples that God's new order was infinitely beneficial.

Their Lord's first priority was to correct the misperception that he was a ghost. Like now, people speculated that the spirits of dead people lingered on earth in a disembodied form. Plato's world-view prevailed among the Gentiles. This influential Greek philosopher insisted that the essence of a person was an immortal soul which existed prior to birth, till it became stuck in a mortal body. Pagans believed that at death the soul was freed to return to the spiritual world.

In contrast, Jews asserted that each person is a wondrous, unique creation—body and soul. The essence of being human is body and soil together—they are not separated, even in death. According to Genesis 1:31, bodily existence is "very good." It was sin (not fate) that brought weakness and death to human existence. That's why Jews yearned for the Messiah to come and restore God's Kingdom on earth. The dead would be resurrected—body and soul—not as creepy corpses, but as beautifully re-created bodies made of stuff that never dies.

Before he died, the disciples hoped that Jesus was the Messiah. But the cross shattered their hopes that Jesus would restore God's reign. Evil and death had prevailed. How could a tortured-to-death man be the Messiah? Since many Jews (like some Christians now) harbored superstitions, when Jesus appeared, they assumed that his tormented spirit was haunting.

Jesus straighten them out! To paraphrase the decades-old Olivia Newton John, Jesus' message was... "Let's get phy-si-cal!" (Sorry, I couldn't resist!) But consider his invitation: "Look at my hands and my feet... Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones..."

The disciples' emotions swung from terror to euphoria, for "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement." That's when Jesus eliminated all doubt by chowing down on grilled fish. Ghosts don't eat. He was really alive, with a new kind of body! He was what design engineers call a "prototype."

Over a forty day period, five hundred witnesses beheld the prototype for resurrected humanity (1 Cor 15:3-6, 20). The Father plans nothing less than a total re-do of human existence. He will re-create His sons and daughters in bodily form, without flaw, of stuff that lasts. Having bodies, we will recognize each other. Re-created in pristine form, we might resemble our mortal selves at our prime. We will eat and drink at a banquet (Isaiah 25:6-9), reside in a city of gardens, and bask in the presence of the Triune God (Revelation 22:15). Resurrection bodies > disembodied souls!

Jesus also helped his disciples grasp why he was a crucified Messiah. Opening their minds with Isaiah's Suffering Servant prophecy (Isaiah 53), Jesus reminded them Scriptures had predicted that the Father would fight evil with sacrifice. God's grace enables people to receive God's life!

By this point, the disciples probably felt ready to tell the world about God's awesome love. Jesus said "wait." Soon they would robed with the Spirit's power.

We have awesome news! In Christ, God has defeated sin and destroyed death. Could there be any better news to share? Not only do we have the testimony of credible and courageous eyewitnesses, we also bear the Spirit's powerful presence.

### Questions to Ponder or Discuss:

- What intriguing insights did you gain about bodily resurrection? Does it contradict what you have believed about life after death? How might you investigate it further?
- For you, what is the greatest mental or emotional barrier to sharing the good news of Jesus with other people? How might you work at overcoming those barriers?