



Rev Helen Jacobi
An embodied faith

Acts 3:12-9

Luke 24:36-48

Easter 3

18 April 2021

The Easter season seems to demand some mental gymnastics from us.

We have a mixture of feelings I think as we embrace the mystery of the resurrected Christ.

Especially when we get to the nuts and bolts readings of last week and this.

The gospel writers are very keen to tell us in detail that Jesus was physically present with them.

Last week we had Thomas wanting to touch Jesus and his wounds; this week we have the astounded disciples offering Jesus a piece of broiled fish to eat.

By describing these physical encounters the gospel writers are trying to answer the question – did Jesus really appear to them?

Many theories abounded - was he not a ghost; or a figment of the grieving imagination of the disciples; or was he someone else; or did he not really die.

All of those were possible theories; and frankly all much more plausible than actual resurrection.

No wonder the disciples were “startled and terrified.”

And being invited to look at his wounds and watching him eat was not at all reassuring.

Maybe the ending of Mark’s gospel, which we read on Easter Day, was right. “The women said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.”

In today's version from Luke, after Jesus has eaten his fish, he teaches the disciples, "opens their minds to the scriptures" and sets what they are experiencing in a bigger context.

The context of God revealed to the people of God down through the centuries; those who had waited for and actively expected the Messiah; and how now their hopes were being realised.

Jesus opens their eyes and hearts to a new understanding.

And then tells them "you are witnesses of these things."

You have seen, experienced, known me and so you know have task to bear witness.

Which is what they do.

We, however, 2000 years later struggle to wrap our modern and post modern minds around what we read and hear.

The Western world way of thinking, from St Augustine on, has left us with a separation of body and spirit in the way we think.

And so while we might be comfortable thinking of the spirit of Jesus continuing, we are pretty unsure how the body comes into it.

Which in turn leads us to separate the "spiritual" from the rest of our concrete lives.

I think post modernism; the digital world; and our understanding of a Maori world view are all leading us back to a much more embodied experience of our faith.

Post modernism allows multiple world views, and multiple ways of seeing "truth"; the digital world opens us up to so many extraordinary connections and opportunities; and Maori spirituality grounds us in the land, the whenua, and in the story of the people of this land, tangata whenua.

The eucharist of course has always grounded us in the physical and the real experience of Christ's presence.

As we enact our strange ritual of sharing bread and wine we embody the presence of Christ among us.

And it is the same with the resurrection.

One writer says “Bodily resurrection expresses the affirmation that the creature formed from ‘the dust of the ground’ (in the Genesis creation story) is indeed good and what God intended.To insist on the reality of the resurrected body is to demand that we accept our present reality as the place where transformations of ultimate significance take place.”¹

Resurrection means that transformation of life now is possible, not waiting till we reach some magical heaven like place after death. This is what Linda talked about in her sermon last week - the absolute miracle that is the City Mission building going up next door. Those who doubted like Thomas have been proved wrong as \$110 million has been raised and the project is nearing completion. Linda said “as Easter people, as people of hope we can believe a whole new beginning will take place right on our doorstep”² and she invited us “to contemplate the story of a determined doubter (Thomas) who gradually found his way to faith, who came to see the Wounded One as God in his own times.”³

The disciples saw the wounded one and saw God was with them as God had been from the first days of creation and the one who was made from the dust of the earth.

A resurrection faith is an embodied faith.
It is physical and practical.

We will gather after our service today for the AGM of our parish. This is an opportunity to reflect back and give thanks for the things we have done together – gathered for worship in person or online; served our community as a parish and as individuals; worked on the pressing issue of our day – climate change, the referendum last year on the end of life bill; served the City Mission; we have baptized,

¹ Stephen A Cooper Feasting on the Word Year B vol 2 p426-8

² Rev Linda Murphy, sermon Easter 2

³ ibid

married and buried; we have cried and laughed together; we have given our money and our time; we have prayed together. All these things we do as real people, living the reality of our spiritual lives, not some separate spiritual realm.

This is the resurrection life.

Real, grounded, bearing wounds and eating fish.

Alleluia Christ is risen.

Risen indeed, alleluia.