

Pastor Colleen's Sermon of April 26, 2009

Grace, Peace and Mercy be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

We all know that old saying, "Pinch me, I can't believe this is real."
We hear people say this whenever they are in a situation that seems too good to be true.
It's as if what is happening is part of a dream and somehow by feeling a pinch it will help us realize that what we are experiencing is real and not imagined.

Now, let's picture the scene of this morning's gospel story.
The disciples are locked away, grieving, reeling from the events of the crucifixion
And into their locked room walks the risen Christ.
Now understand this is a time where ghosts and spirits were a part of the culture.
So the disciples have to be asking themselves, could what they are seeing be real?

Because in their reality it was an absolute impossibility.
It was unrealistic.
It was not human.
The text describes the emotional state of the disciples in realistic terms.
It says, "While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering."
It was just too good to be true.
This is an absolute, "pinch me" moment.

But instead of offering to pinch anyone...
The risen Christ does something even more tangible
He asks, "Have you anything here to eat?"
And the disciples offer him a piece of broiled fish, and he eats.

Could anything sound less dramatic?
Yet it is in eating that Jesus demonstrates beyond any doubt
that his presence is not a collective hallucination born out of the disciples' grief,
that the resurrection is not simply a matter of disembodied spirits
but something solid and real.

And why is this such a big deal?
Why does the gospel writer Luke even include this in the story?
Well because in popular Jewish belief in Jesus' time it was understood that angels and ghosts did not eat—
and so by having Jesus actually eat with the disciples they are saying in capital letters,
JESUS IS NOT A GHOST! JESUS IS RISEN!

But why is that so important?
Well, for one thing it means that Jesus' victory over sin and death is total.
And that the forces of sin and death literally have no hold over him.
But there's more to it than just that.

It means, the resurrected power of Jesus,

the power of God that has been let loose in the world through the resurrection,
 is alive in the world—
 the presence of Christ in the world is a physical presence, a physical body.
 The Risen Christ is alive...

And today the bodily presence of Christ in the world is no less real than it was 2000 years ago.
 Christ is still physically present in the world,
 physically present each and every day—
 But so often we are caught up in our own realities...
 Our own grief, our own work, our own busy lives... that we don't see him enter into our locked
 rooms.
 What I mean to say, is that we are often so caught up looking for the big "water into wine"
 moments
 That we miss the fact that he's right here among us eating a piece of fish.

Think about it,
 what real, concrete behaviors might demonstrate undeniably that Jesus is alive and present?
 What does it take for us to have one of those, "please pinch me moments,"
 where we know beyond a shadow of a doubt the risen Christ is in our presence?

Well... all it really takes are eyes that are longing to see...
 And ears that are open to hear...

Think about it...
 You see the risen Christ every day.
 Every, single day we have examples of the presence of Christ in our lives...

For example...
 Whenever you stop to help someone pick up something they dropped in the grocery store—
 the resurrected body of Christ is there!
 Whenever someone gives us a smile and directions when we're lost—
 the resurrected body of Christ is there!
 Whenever people speak out for human rights, or the poor, or the oppressed, or the voiceless,
 the resurrected body of Christ is there!
 Whenever, and wherever, you find random and spontaneous acts of kindness, care, and love—
 the body of Christ is there!
 This is not boring old stuff out of a dusty old book.
 This is real!
 This is something still present in our world and still taking place in our lives.

But some of you may still be doubting...
 Some of you may still be looking for that big "water into wine moment..."

Ok...
 Here are some real, tangible... pinch me moments that are happening in our very own lives...

In today's Resurrection Connection there is a testimony from two of our older members.
Elmer and Charlotte Stout...

They wrote a note to express their gratitude because of our support ministry team here at LCR. It seems that our support ministers drive the Stout's to doctor appointments, help them with grocery shopping, and basically serve in whatever capacity they can to help aid them in their daily lives.

And the Stouts need help because technically they are both legally blind.

And they say in this note that without the support ministers they wouldn't be able to stay here in their home in Yardley...

THAT is real

The resurrected body of Christ is here!

Another story...

Once a month our Sonshiner's group goes to Pickering Manor nursing home to lead a short worship service for the residents of the nursing home.

These Sonshiners have been going to Pickering for over thirty years.

They sing songs, offer a word of prayer, read a story...

But mostly they hold a hand and say hello...

They show the residents of this nursing home that they are loved and prayed for and not alone in this world...

The resurrected body of Christ is here!

Then there is our disciples with special needs ministry...

This is the ministry developed by folks from LCR that works with mentally challenged adults.

It is a ministry that offers these adults a place to gather in fellowship, and a place where they can do service projects and give back to the community as well...

It is an amazing ministry where the entire goal is to say to this group of mentally challenged individuals who are often left behind...

We care about you, we want to offer you a safe, fun place to gather, and we value each one of you...

The resurrected body of Christ is here!

And then there is one of my favorite, piece of fish stories...

Recently a friend of mine who is battling cancer shared a very special story with me.

She is bald because of her chemotherapy treatments and being a bald woman often draws a lot of attention.

She was in a bank, waiting on line and because it was a hot day she took off her hat.

It was a very busy bank but the tellers behind the counters were all very friendly to the customers,

Saying hello, asking how their days were going, asking about their families.

Well it seems that the manager of this bank was the friendliest of all the people...

When she looked up and saw my bald friend she said to her,

"I have to come over there and give you a hug!

and so she did.

And she said to my friend,

"You keep fighting and know that we're all pulling for you."

My friend was surprised and speechless.

She said when she was done with her banking and turned to leave she heard the manager yell after her, "Now you stay strong, take care of yourself," and she waved to her.

My friend was absolutely overwhelmed by the kindness of this stranger...

THAT is real...

The resurrected body of Christ is here!

The resurrected Jesus is here!

He is alive!

He cannot be found in the tomb.

The body of Christ lives, and the power of Christ is still here in the world—in our own lives.

And Christ tells the disciples,

"You are witnesses of these things."

Folks...

So are we...

The appearance of the risen Christ energized and reminded the disciples of who they were and what they could be.

The story of the resurrection

The stories of the risen Christ... alive... in our presence are ways Christ reenergizes us as well

And these stories are ours to witness to as well...

these stories are ours to share now...

the story of the resurrection is now in our hands.

It's ours to use, to reach out with, to pass on to our children and our neighbors.

The resurrection of Jesus is a message to the nations,
an amazing, joyful, impossible story that positively happened.

We have evidence of the resurrected Christ in our presence each and every day...

We don't need to pinch ourselves...

We just need to share the stories and point to Christ...

Point to his hands... his feet... his very real presence in our lives and the lives of our friends and family...

Come and see...

We are witnesses that the resurrected body of Christ is here...

Let us this day, gladly and boldly share the good news of Christ's presence...

Amen

May the peace of God which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen