



Monday

Luke 24:36-43

³⁶ While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ³⁷ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

This post-resurrection appearance of Jesus is striking in two ways. First, Jesus wants to be clear that he, the Crucified One, is now the Resurrected One. He is one and the same, lest anyone doubt that. Second, he wants them to see that he has been *completely* raised, body and spirit, not simply his spirit, or as the Greeks might have said, his soul. This appearance of Jesus is an assurance to us regarding *our* resurrection. First of all, we are assured that the Crucified One has indeed defeated Death and the powers of evil, and has risen. Second, as St. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, we are assured that, like Jesus, we will receive a new spirit and a new body at the resurrection. Paul says that the mortal puts on immortality. Or in some translations we read that the earthly puts on the heavenly. In any case, like Jesus in this story, we are told that all that is of this life is made new in the resurrection. Our resurrection is certain, because the resurrection of Christ is certain. Alleluia!

Prayer

We praise you, Lord Christ, for your victory over Death and the Devil. We praise you that your power and love have come together in the resurrection, and because of that, we need no longer fear death. You have claimed us in our baptism. We are now part of the Body of the Resurrected One. We praise your name forever. AMEN.

Tuesday

Psalm 122

¹ I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!”

² Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

³ Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together.

⁴ To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

⁵ For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David.

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you.

⁷ Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.”

⁸ For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, “Peace be within you.”

⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Scholars tell us that the opening verse of this psalm was recited by worshippers as they arrived at the temple in Jerusalem after their pilgrimage there. When, in verse 4, it says that “the tribes go up” it is referring to the tribes of Israel who are ascending the hills as they approach Jerusalem. I remember when I was a kid and we would go to visit my grandparents in Iowa. One of our favorite games was to see who could first spot the town water tower as we neared my grandparents’ hometown. “I see it! I see it!” we’d cry as it would come into view. It was the assurance that we were nearing our destination. I imagine that the children who made pilgrimage to Jerusalem with their parents and grandparents had a similar experience as they approached Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives came into view. “I see it! I see it! There it is!” they would cry as they spotted the city coming into view in the distance. It was this same sort of joy that I sensed as people returned to in-person Easter worship this year after a two-year absence. I could just hear them saying in their singing and in their gathering, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”

Prayer

How blessed we are, Almighty God, to once again worship together as people of God. We thank you for the blessings of one another: the care and love, concern and support we feel. We thank you also, for your eternal presence. You are ever with us, yet we thank you that we can once again gather in your house to hear your Word and sing your praises. All praise and blessing be yours, Almighty God, now and forever. AMEN.

Wednesday

Revelation 2:1-8

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

² “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false.

³ I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

In St. John’s revelation he is commanded to write to the seven churches in ancient Asia that have been living under persecution. Ephesus is the first of the churches to whom he writes. Notice that he commends them for their patient endurance and their ability to discern true from false apostles. But then he also calls them to repentance for abandoning their first love. By this he seems to mean that they have forgotten that loving Christ and loving one another are finally the true test of believers. It is not so much what we say or what we think that matters, but how it works itself out in our lives together. St. Paul, in his well-known letter to the Corinthians, said it this way, “If I give away all my possessions, and hand over my body [as a martyr] so that I may boast, but do not have love, I am nothing.” (I Cor. 13:3) This word comes to us as well whenever we are tempted to believe that faith and knowledge and wisdom are all that is required of us as Christians. No, finally it is love that is most important.

Prayer

Blessed and Holy God, forgive us when we act in unloving ways. Forgive us when we forget that following in the way of Jesus means living in the way of love. Grant us a new portion of your spirit so that every day we might go out into the world and love those we encounter, even those who are difficult to love. We ask this in your holy name. AMEN.

Thursday

Isaiah 5:11-16

¹¹ Ah, you who rise early in the morning in pursuit of strong drink,
who linger in the evening to be inflamed by wine,

¹² whose feasts consist of lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine,
but who do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands!

¹³ Therefore my people go into exile without knowledge; their nobles are dying of hunger,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.

¹⁴ Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure;
the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude go down, her throng and all who exult in her.

¹⁵ People are bowed down, everyone is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are humbled.

¹⁶ But the LORD of hosts is exalted by justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness.

The picture we have here is of the nobility of the land feasting and partying while the regular folks are being hauled off into exile. It is a hideous scene akin to a scene I once encountered in Atlantic City. Some friends and I were in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on a work trip and we decided to go to the casinos one night. As we walked along the sidewalks near the casino we were struck by the brokenness and neglect that was evident. Right outside the glittering casino were empty lots with abandoned, burned out cars, and piles of garbage and broken glass. Sidewalks were heaving and broken, street lights were in disrepair, walls were filled with graffiti. But once inside the casino, all that

disappeared. There, all was laughter and fun, with no notion that just yards away was a world of poverty and suffering. God's people must never allow themselves to be lulled into thinking that sitting in a comfortable pew on Sunday morning and never taking into account the brokenness of the world is fine with God. The prophet's last line says it all: "The Lord of hosts is exalted by justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness."

Prayer

Grant us eyes to see the injustice in the world, Holy God, and the courage and resolve to be a force for justice. Forgive us when we have neglected or contributed to the poverty of others. Give us hearts that are sorrowful over those things that make you sorrowful. Use us to bring justice to your people. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Friday

Revelation 3:14-19

¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation:

¹⁵ “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.’ You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. ¹⁹ I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent.

This message from St. John to the congregation in Laodicea is a warning to any of us who are apt to grow “lukewarm” in faith. Lukewarm means complacent, satisfied, unconcerned about the needs of the world around us. It can be easy for us to become this way as we sit in our affluent congregations. St. John reminds us that we have been blessed to be a blessing. We have been given an abundance so that we might share abundantly. We have been given many gifts so that we might share much with others. Abundance need not lead us to feeling guilty; rather, abundance should lead us into a generosity of spirit that is contagious to all we encounter. As St. Paul wrote to Timothy, “As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.”

Prayer

Thank you, Generous God, for all your blessings to us. Thank you for showering us with abundance. Forgive us whenever we have failed to share generously with others. Give us open hearts and open hands to be always joyful in sharing what we have with others. We pray this in Christ’s name.
AMEN.