

Easter 3B (4/15/2018)

Acts 3:12-19

Psalm 4

1 John 3:1-7

Luke 24:36b-48

What does it mean to be truly alive? According to the resurrection stories in Luke, to be truly alive is to eat – and to feed others. It's no wonder then that at the heart of Christian practice there is a meal. Gathered together by the Holy Spirit, the living Lord feeds us with a word of hope and a holy meal, then sends us to feed others.

The season of Easter sets before us a veritable feast of resurrection stories. We've already enjoyed courses from Mark and John, and today, Luke presents his dish. The Gospel for the Third Sunday of Easter this year is probably the least familiar of the resurrection stories in Luke, following immediately on the heels of Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Becoming recognizable to them "in the breaking of the bread," Jesus suddenly vanishes from their sight, and they race back to Jerusalem to report what has happened. As soon as they're reunited with the other disciples, Jesus appears again to all of them, and the details of the encounter are recorded in today's Gospel.

The disciples' fearful and incredulous response is similar to their reaction in John, as is Jesus' insistence on his bodily presence: "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." Still, the disciples wonder and doubt. So, in Luke's version, Jesus goes one step further to demonstrate that he is really alive, that there is continuity between his pre-crucifixion and post-resurrection existence¹: "Have you anything here to eat?" he asks. The disciples offer him some fish, which he promptly chews

¹ See Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 854-5.

and swallows, and no mere apparition would do that. **Jesus' eating confirms that salvation is corporeal. Resurrection life incorporates the whole self, and not just a disembodied spirit.**

So, the Gospel of Luke gives a remarkable answer to the question: What does it mean to be truly alive? According to these resurrection stories, to be truly alive is *to eat!* I imagine many of us would agree. Of course, every living thing subsists on food, but there's something more to eating than survival. As a bishop once said, "There's a hunger beyond food that's expressed in food, and that's why feeding is always a kind of miracle."²

Sara Miles, Episcopal priest, author, and director of a feeding ministry in San Francisco, captures the fundamental significance of food in her memoir, *Take This Bread*. Prior to her conversion to Christian faith at Holy Communion one memorable Sunday morning, she worked as a war journalist, covering conflicts around the world. No matter the location or politics, no matter the culture or economic circumstances of the people involved, the conflicts all had one thing in common: shared food.

[Excerpt from *Take This Bread*³]

To be truly alive, even and perhaps especially in difficult times, is to eat – and to feed others. Whether at holiday gatherings or funerals – whether in celebration or grief, joy or fear – the sharing of food unites and sustains us. It's no wonder then that at the heart of Christian practice there is a meal. The Holy Spirit gathers us together from our varying circumstances every Sunday morning.

² Cited in Sara Miles, *Take This Bread*, 23.

³ 49-50.

Christ meets us here, just as he met the first disciples, to open our hearts and minds that we might understand the scriptures according to the mystery of his death and resurrection.⁴ Then, we share the bread and wine, signs of Christ's life given and poured out for the life of the world. And having fed us, the living Lord sends us out again to feed others.

Dear church, one post-resurrection appearance was never going to be enough.⁵ So, **in every instance of hospitality, at every gathering around a table⁶ – and especially this one – Jesus shows up to feed our faith.** Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Now, let's eat.

⁴ See R. Alan Culpepper, in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IX, 486.

⁵ <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#resources>.

⁶ Culpepper, 480.