

^{36b} Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit 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 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, 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 before them.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Today is the Third Sunday in our Easter Series: THE IMAGES OF JESUS. Easter Sunday was the Empty Tomb, and the Picture we used was AN EMPTY PICTURE FRAME. Last Sunday was the JOYFUL JESUS and we had pictures of Jesus laughing. Today we look at **THE FULL HUMANITY OF JESUS**.

One of the PICTURE THEMES for this Sunday suggested by the Worship Committee, was PICTURES OF JESUS WITH CHILDREN.

One of the images presented in picture today shows Jesus sitting with a group of children. I didn't realize, until the picture's owner Lynn Staker told me, that the name of the picture is *"What Happened to Your Hand?"* She explained to me that this picture came from a series of picture books by Harry Anderson, which first appeared in 1945.

It was an **important theme** that I think **we sometimes overlook**. But the **Gospel Writer Luke did not**. He believed it was very important.

I'm not as fond of the language used in today's translation, for verse 37:
“they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a SPIRIT.”

Other translations say **“and thought they saw a GHOST.”** That conveys their emotion better: They thought they were seeing A GHOST!

Luke goes to some length to show that what they were seeing was NOT a GHOST, or a mere SPIRIT. But indeed, **this Jesus among them was a REAL BODY** – who ate broiled fish – *hence teaching a lesson I always take to heart (pardon the pun) – that broiled fish is better than fried fish.*

Seriously, the image the reader (us) is meant to receive is that this is a real corporeal body, not a mass hallucination, not some non-physicality.

They were seeing the RESURRECTED BODY of Jesus.

He was **ALIVE** and **REAL**, not **DEAD** and **IMAGINED**.

He was here sharing a meal with them. Like in Holy Communion, His Presence was **REAL**, not merely a remembrance, not merely a memorial, not merely a memory shared. He was **ALIVE**, not **DEAD**; **REAL** not **IMAGINED**.

He still had the scars in his hands, feet, and side. He bore the **FULL HUMANITY** of you and of me.

He was, and still is, as the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews put it (later on in the New Testament) **the PIONEER and PERFECTER of our Faith.** (Hebrews 12:2)

He was the embodiment of **MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD** – showing us what is our potential. Indeed, in John's Gospel, Jesus told His disciples and us: **“Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will [that person] do....”** (John 14:12)

He was alive; He bore our full humanity as He did before the Crucifixion. That point made by Luke; he goes on then to describe how Jesus gave explanation to all that His life and ministry were about (in verses 44-46)

But His teaching took on NEW MEANING now, because, although Jesus was fully human now as He had been, He was also different.

The disciples were looking at a RESURRECTED BODY – now a mere spirit, not a ghost, not a collective vision or hallucination – a **RESURRECTED BODY**.

And here, it is important to distinguish between a **RESURRECTED BODY** and a **RESUSCITATED BODY** – like that of Jesus' friend, Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, whom Jesus raised from the dead.

Lazarus came back to life, but he would die again. His body was merely resuscitated. Jesus came back to life, and would NEVER DIE AGAIN.

As the writer of our just completed Lenten study put it:

“Resuscitation means bringing back to life – returning life to the way it was. Resurrection means a whole new life, a different life.”¹

We so often want things returned to just the way they were – Jesus told Mary on Easter morning not to hold onto Him. She wanted his body to be just the way it was before. And it was not and would not evermore be.

When we fall upon hard times; when bad life circumstances, we pray to God for a miracle – and usually we want God to work a miracle that will return things back to the way that they were before the bad life circumstance appeared. That's not very often the way God works.

¹ Robert Fuquay, *The God We Can Know: Exploring the I AM Sayings of Jesus* .

RESURRECTION means new life, but not life the same as it was before – it's NEW and it's BETTER. It's how the God of Resurrection works. The apostle Paul described it like this in his letter to the Church at Ephesus:

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine....
(Ephesians 3:20)

The God of Easter uses Jesus to show us the way RESURRECTION POWER is at work. And the God of Easter works that power on BOTH sides of the Grave.

When our lives face what seem like insurmountable circumstances, a dead end, a no hope scenario, we need to know that Resurrection Power is available – but we canNOT try to limit God's wonder working power to merely returning things to the way they were. Our God is chomping at the bit to ***accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine***

THAT is Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith – demonstrating what FULL HUMANITY – what the human body made in the image of God – is meant to look like, to live, and to act.

And then – as we come to the end of the Gospel lesson for today—in verses 47-48, we see how this Jesus – this RESURRECTED Jesus – after showing, and after explaining, then has the audacity to COMMISSION those fully human disciples to **GO OUT AND DO!**

Remember His words in John's Gospel: ***also do the works that I do, and greater works than these*** (John 14:12)

Somewhere this past week I read the proverb that **no one's MERE REPUTATION, even Jesus' reputation, will actually change a person's**

life. We have to let Jesus enter into our lives and THEN: we have to actually DO IT in order to experience the change.

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, an inventor discovered the art of making fire. He took this new discovery to the snow clad regions of the north, and showed this fire making to the tribe there. The people were so caught up in the power of this new gift that they forgot to give thanks to the inventor, who one day quietly slipped away.

The next tribe he visited was just as eager to receive the powerful gift he came to offer. But the local priests were jealous of the inventor's popularity and so they had him assassinated.

Then, to throw suspicion away from them, the priests had a portrait of the Great Inventor hung on the wall behind the altar in their temple. They developed a liturgy for the people to use in celebrating the Great Inventor's contribution. His tools for making fire were put into a little box held high and lifted up for everyone to honor.

The High Priest himself set to writing "The Life of" this Great Inventor, which was treated like a Holy Book, and people were punished if they did not follow all of the teachings and doctrines that the High Priest said were the Law according to the Great Inventor.

But ... caught up, as they were, in these religious tasks, the people completely forgot the art of making fire.²

Jesus emptied Himself of His glory in heaven and put on human flesh, to show us THE WAY to FULL HUMANITY – **that we may never more again say: "I'm only human."** (cf. *Philippians 2:4-11*) We have this remarkable treasure in our own flesh. **But we must DO IT.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

² FROM Anthony DeMello, *The Prayer of the Frog* (Gujarat, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash 1988) pp 7-8