

## **Touch and See: The Resurrection Reality Is Touchable** **Luke 24:36b-48**

### **Tina's Rock**

On Easter Sunday, I came to the church around 8 a.m. When I opened the front door, I could smell the sweet scent of lilies and see the beautifully decorated altar. At the same time, [ppt] I saw a rock with a lily and a cross at the entrance of the sanctuary. I was so moved by it that I took a picture. When I uploaded the picture on our Facebook page, Barbara Cole commented "Tina's rock!" I heard that Tina Bishop discovered this rock and brought it for our Easter celebration. This rock, lily and cross perfectly reminded me of the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When you go out today after worship, look at them and touch them as if you were standing at the empty tomb. In that way, we may realize that the resurrection reality is not an abstract concept but rather, it is touchable.

### **The Resurrection Reality Is Touchable**

Today's gospel story comes from Luke's gospel but many of you may notice that it sounds very similar to John's gospel that we read last Sunday. In each of these texts Jesus appears to the disciples; they are afraid and unbelieving; and Jesus convinces them that he is, indeed their teacher and friend raised from the dead. He shows them the wounds on his hands and feet and they believe.

Of course, there are also some differences. The most notable difference between them is that Luke stresses the physical reality of the resurrection. The resurrected Jesus has a body. He has flesh and bones. Jesus feels hungry and eats a piece of broiled fish in their presence. What does Luke want to tell us? Jesus' resurrection is real. That's what Luke wants to share with us.

Jesus says "touch me and see." In the gospel of John, Jesus says, "don't hang on to me," when he meets Mary in the garden. But in Luke, Jesus says to the disciples, "touch me and see!" The Greek verbs that are used in this verse are second person, plural and imperative. So Jesus is saying, "all y'all, grab hold of me and behold!" I imagine that he opens his arms and calls his disciples into his arms just like this video. [ppt] As you can see in this video clip, a son was temporarily puzzled when he saw his dad who was supposed to be overseas.

Of course, Jesus' reunion with his disciples is different from this surprise family reunion because Jesus was supposed to be dead. By showing his wounds and eating a meal before them, Jesus is telling them, "I'm not a ghost or delusion brought on by intense terror and fear. I'm as real as you. I am here with you." The resurrection of Jesus is real and touchable! It is grounded in the reality in which we live.

The fact that the resurrection of Jesus is touchable and real means that our life of faith in the risen Christ has to be grounded in reality. We should not take the story of the resurrection only as a past event, something like "Jesus died for my sin and saved my soul." The good news of Christ's resurrection needs to be touchable and real today.

### **The gospel is always touchable**

In fact, the gospel has always been real and touchable. Do you remember my first sermon at Asbury? I told you why I am here. I said, "I am here today not because the bishop has appointed me here but because of your Methodist ancestors." Methodist missionaries who met the risen Christ in their lives came to Korea and shared the message of the risen Christ. They helped Koreans to experience Christ through their hands and feet. Many Koreans were able see

and touch the risen Christ through them. In 1887, Miss Meta Howard, the first Methodist female medical doctor, came to Korea as a medical missionary. Due to the influence of conservative Confucianism, a male doctor could not treat female patients at that time. Doctor Howard responded to the call to missionary work and volunteered to serve in Korea. She established the first women's hospital in Korea and served women regardless of their social status or ability to pay. For her first two years, Doctor Howard treated more than 8,000 women. Poor and slave women could not pay for their treatment, but they wanted to express their gratitude so they brought her an egg. According to an annual report of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, sometimes, female medical missionaries received more than a thousand eggs in a year. Many Korean women were saved by the hands of Doctor Howard and other female medical missionaries. For them, the resurrection of Christ was not an empty word but real and touchable.

The resurrection is not a past event but it is the reality we can experience today. As Jesus says, "Touch and see," we need to grab hold of him and see him as if our lives depended upon it.

### **The church the body of Christ**

We call the church the body of Christ. It means that we can see and touch the risen Christ through the church. I am not saying that the church is perfect. I will not idealize the church. Like all other human gatherings, the church has problems. As we all know, the United Methodist Church is on the verge of division. We sometimes hurt each other. Racism is still real in the church. Sexism runs deep in church history. Just like the risen Christ bore wounds in his hands and feet, we, the church, also have wounds and scars. However, we who have touched and seen the risen Christ, also try to purify ourselves and be a holy sanctuary for our Christ. Sometimes, we can touch and see the presence of Christ through our worship service and communion. Sometimes, we are touched by the risen Christ through the kind words and serving hands of church members.

A few weeks ago, I shared my prayer concern about increasing racial hate crimes against AAPI communities. After I shared that Juhee doesn't feel safe going into the public alone, I received many supportive words and emails from our church members. Some church members offered to be like bodyguards for Juhee when I cannot do my duty and accompany her. Some church members shared that they have never thought about this issue and would like to know more about it. In all these moments, I have seen the presence of Christ within Asbury UMC. The deadly power of racism is real but the power of the risen Christ is also real. Through your caring words and compassionate hearts, I can feel that our Christ has overcome the power of death. With hope in the risen Christ, we can work for the transformation of the world.

### **We are the witness of the risen Christ**

Christ is risen and the risen Christ is with us. We can see and experience the presence of Christ through each other's hands. It means that we are witnesses of the risen Christ. As Jesus said to his disciples, "peace be with you," we are called to witness peace to the world by forgiving others and working for reconciliation. William Blake said, "The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness." It's not by winning but by forgiving that we witness the power of the risen Christ in the world. We witness that love overcomes hate.

I'm sure you remember the Charleston church shooting in 2015. A white supremacist entered the Charleston Emmanuel African Episcopal Church during a Bible study, and murdered our innocent sisters and brothers in Christ. Surprisingly, what families and relatives of the

victims did in response to this unforgivable hate crime was to announce forgiveness. A mother who lost her son and grandmother said, “You have killed some of the most beautiful people that I have ever known. Every fiber in my body hurts and I will never be the same. . . . but may God have mercy on you.” This is the forgiveness that only people who truly believe God can give. Announcing forgiveness for the attacker does not mean that they resolved all emotional anger, resentment, and grief, but regardless of what their emotional response to that person may have been, they intentionally stopped the cycle of vengeance and violence with their act of forgiveness because they believe and embody Jesus’ commandment to love one’s enemy. Through their act of forgiveness, they witnessed to the risen Christ and made the power of resurrection touchable and seeable to us.

On Easter Sunday, we declared “Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!” We are Easter people. We have seen him and touched him. Right? So, choose love over hate because our Christ has risen. Choose forgiveness over resentment because our Christ has risen. Choose hope over fear because our Christ has risen. “Tell the Good News to all by being Christ’s voice, hands, and feet in the world. Amen.”