

Belovedness be with You

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Texts: Luke 24:36b-48

Would you please pray with me:

Loving God, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be a reflection of your essence. Give us this day the daily bread that our hearts need for healing, reflection, and love. Amen.

Good Morning FCC, it is always a blessing and a joy to be here with you on this time of the liturgical year where we get to ride the tide of Easter together. We are in a time where just like the waves, there are different emotions that come and go.

Today, we have another story of Jesus' post-resurrection revelation to his disciples. We hear once again Jesus' words of "Peace be with you".

Yet, we can see in our story that these words did not immediately transmit peace to the disciples.

Instead, we see how the first time the disciples continued to be afraid and have doubts as if they had seen a ghost.

The second time Jesus proceeded to show his humanity, his flesh and his wounds.

I get it, the fear and despair were still very present in the bodies and minds of these witnesses. It is a hard thing to believe in because of how bad things looked when Jesus was crucified.

But this time they were able to see Jesus's flesh and presence among them after being so anxious about him being gone and their own lives now being in danger.

I wonder if one of them tried to hug Jesus in this moment? We might never know, but what we do know from what we get in this story, is that once they recognized Jesus's in fleshly presence they were "while in their joy, they were still in disbelief" There is another version of this passage found in the Message version that says,

"They still couldn't believe what they were seeing. It was too much; it seemed too good to be true"

And after this Jesus being Jesus, asked them, do you have anything to eat?

As a further step to show them his humanity, he showed them his hunger and ability to break bread and eat with them.

Our text says, “And in their presence he ate with them”

After this, our story ends with a revelation of understanding and fulfillment of promises.

I loved this story, because it just shows us so many ways that we can relate to this text.

I resonate and wholeheartedly stand with what the disciples felt in that moment. Because in so many different stages of my life I have been in both positions sometimes at different stages in my life and other times all together in the same week, the same day.

There are days that I start in fear and disbelief and end in joy and still quite a bit of disbelief that the day turned around the way it did.

I wonder if what this text could show us is the different ways in which we can react to our disbelief.

Sometimes we disbelieve because things are just too bad. And sometimes we disbelieve because things are just too good to be true.

Either way, I think that staying in this state of disbelief may paralyze us to be fully present and aware of the moments we are living that could be either moments of grief or moments of joy and celebration.

I have to be honest and candid with you friends. This text was timely preaching to me as I meditated on it. And in our theological reflection time with Rev. Dan he asked me a very simple and exciting question,

Your wedding is coming up right? And you are also graduating! And this immediately poured out to me a feeling of joy in the affirmation that yes, my wedding is coming up and that soon I will be graduating with my MDiv in May.

Yet, I caught myself being so afraid to say it out loud, so afraid of affirming that indeed things were ending in the way I prayed and hoped they would. I told Rev. Dan , I am so afraid, it is too good to be true! And I think I am having a hard time to accept it and I am just waiting for the other shoe to drop. Just like the disciples, in my joy I was in disbelief.

But then I started to look back at how before getting to this point things would get so hard, so packed, that I often thought to myself there is no way this can be happening, there is no way I will be able to accomplish all of these tasks. Either moment I felt paralyzed, not being able to be present in either of the moments.

I share this story not to toot my own horn, maybe it is to share this moment of joy while at the same time recognizing the moments of hardship that came before it.

Going back to our story, I see the disciples transition from these moments where they were fully present in their grief while mourning the loss of their friend and the loss of the hope that was supposed to arrive.

But again, I see and uplift the value of being fully present in these moments, not in a hurry to rush our process. At this point, the disciples have spent their time grieving and wondering what will happen next.

I want to lift another element in this story and that is companionship. The disciples were together again, after being scattered, they all welcomed each other into their process of disbelief and grief. What I see in this scene is the presence and ability of love to be a centering force for each of the disciples. I see how they could connect because they felt how from all people only them could understand closely what they were grieving and feeling.

I remembered how as part to some of our gathering welcome language we often say, "Welcome wherever you are in this moment of life" and I think this story shows us a welcome to wherever we are just as Jesus welcomed and greeting the disciples right where they were while showing them his wounds to remind them of his love and friendship.

This is where our second reading became a beautiful companion as I read this text specifically the second verse that says,

"Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed."

What if this is what the disciples felt the moment Jesus revealed himself to them and ate with them and opened their minds? After feeling abandoned and having no plan ahead, what if this was the revelation that they received?

This text shows us that We are created to be beloved and to be returned to our belovedness every time. We are in no rush to have all the answers, all the revelations and have everything resolved.

For what we will be has not yet been revealed. I hope this may be a liberation for you who are still grieving in this Eastertide season, there is no rush to expedite your grief.

I also recognize the time of transition FCC is going through, and I see the value of taking the time to be present as we move forward but wherever we are in this process know that you are loved and cared for.

On the other hand, I also hope this text shows us that if we are indeed experiencing moments of joy and celebration because things have been turning around after long periods of hardship and disbelief, may this be a moment where you look at it and experience it in its fullness.

Friends I invite us to lean in on either of these moments knowing that all in all we are beloved either way.

I hope that fear and disbelief in your belovedness do not hold you back from receiving love/care and being fully present in your season.

I certainly feel this in my heart when I try to deny the good things that happen in my life.

Also, when there is a lot of hurt and while I see a lot of harm being done around me, I feel the disbelief that keeps me away from slowing down and leaning into that grief that may show me the path to healing.

Before I close, I want for us to go back to Jesus' "peace be with you". Because

peace is an action, a posture that we sometimes mention quite often, but what does this really mean? How can this be embodied in this Eastertide of moments where disbelief, grief and joy are present?

I wonder, what if we look at peace in this NT gospel as the peace in the OT the one who comes from the Hebrew word and state of being of "shalom" wholeness?

Maybe we can see Jesus's desire for wholeness to be with the witnesses because he saw their despair and fear after seeing their friend crucified.

I just love how shame and guilt are not present in this moment. Jesus did not appear in the disciple's presence by saying "Shame be with you" or shame on you guys for not being able to believe that I have been raised from the dead.

No, in this story Jesus opens up with a "Peace be with you" wholeness, shalom be with you! In both of their moments of disbelief whether that was the first time that was out of fear or the second time that was because of their disbelief that it was just too good to be true.

This wholeness does not mean perfection because Jesus' body had holes in him, yet he was whole. The wholeness of this moment was being able to be beloved and the belovedness went both ways as Jesus gave them the revelation of resurrection the disciples also showed their belovedness to Jesus by sharing a meal with him.

And it was in this moment where the peace, the love of God was within all of them. Opening their minds to understand that this will be a long-life process of interconnectedness with God and with each other wherever we find ourselves in our life but wherever that is we are beloved and worthy of being fully deeply present.

Friends, Beloved, as we continue to ride and experience this Eastertide where we are not quite yet there in the full Pentecost bliss of the spirit,

Let us embrace the coming and going of the different moments of either amazement of joy or amazement of fear/grief that this season may bring. Let us enter into each other's lives carrying this welcoming and courageous state of "peace being unto us" of belovedness being onto and with us. Of the wholeness of life being within us. Let us slow down, break bread, and open our hearts to the unknown or open our hearts to be present in what we do know at the moment.

Peace be with You. Belovedness be with you!

