

New Creations in Christ

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Scripture: Luke 24:36-48

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.

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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

If you remember last week’s sermon, you may be wondering if you’re experiencing déjà vu or that you’ve recently read this portion of scripture. During this season of Easter, we are revisiting Christ’s resurrection. And yes it is the same event as last week’s scripture reading, but from the gospel of Luke rather than from John. Though most of you have read the accounts of Jesus’ resurrection from the four gospels, you would be correct if you thought we read this just last week.

We do this because there are so many facets of even one verse, like a jewel or multifaceted diamond. And even more facets in the various passages of the Bible, including today’s account of Jesus appearing to the disciples.

It is similar in life such as when you encounter the same situation or issue or event, yet depending on various factors, what you see, interpret and experience could be vastly different from the time before.

We are created by the creator of all, the God who is infinitely creative. Thus, we can see how we were created to be creative also. From looking at what archeologists have found that date back hundreds and even thousands of years, to the most recent inventions, concepts and boundless opportunities in ongoing research and development, we know God created us to be incredibly creative. This is also the same with how our minds are amazingly designed by God to not only imagine but create something out of words, thoughts, feelings, dreams and visions.

In the Bible, when we are told to be renewed by the transformation of our minds in Romans 12:2, we are being told to be conformed not by the world but rather by Christ. And becoming more like Christ occurs as many things in life which takes repetition, connecting deeper, a bond that matures over time, and a healthy relationship that grows and learns.

We’ve all had experiences when reading a well-known story, including of course from the Bible, where though we’ve read it so many times that we think we know it fully, that at times we realized we either somehow missed something before or didn’t realize an aspect that had been right in front of us all the

time. At other times, we see things differently when we are told the same story but from a different perspective.

Just recently I and several church leaders gave the new incoming pastor, Cloud Poy, and his wife Lisa tours of the church and parsonage. And as we were all showing and telling, I had not noticed or seen or realized certain things about our church for which I have been blessed to lead for the past 9 years. One included a light switch for the chapel that lit up one of the beautiful round stain glass windows at the back of the chapel. Had I known that before, I would have turned it on often and when I had preached in front of it for a worship service video. Another was when Pastor Cloud noticed an old church photo with a large group of children and youth, showing the size of the Sunday School class during one of the heights of the church's membership and history. Jim Marlow, our church's trustee chair, walked up to the picture and pointed to a young boy in the picture and said that was him. I thought he was joking, but he was not. I looked carefully and with surprised said it sure did look a little like him.

Sometimes we are taught things over and over again until it really sinks in, makes sense, and we "get it." We all can remember times throughout our lives when it "clicked" for one reason or another. Maybe it was because we reached an age and maturity to comprehend what we couldn't earlier. Maybe it was because after being taught something that we tried it for ourselves and figured out what we only knew in theory from being told or shown, but only more fully understood it when we actually did it and experienced it for ourselves. That makes complete sense.

And so today we come to the portion of scripture we know well, that in a different part of the Bible we read again so that we can see not only what was different for the disciples from the disciple Luke's perspective, but what is also different for us.

Different from the other gospel accounts of Jesus appearing before the disciples that evening when he rose from the dead is that Jesus told them to touch him and see that he is not a ghost. In other gospels, such as John, it is only Thomas who Jesus tells to touch his scars from the crucifixion. The other differences in the gospel of Luke versus the other gospels include that the disciples thought they were seeing ghost, Jesus asking all the disciples why they have doubts and not only Thomas, and so the important act of Jesus asking for food and eating it in front of them.

Jesus helped the disciples overcome their fears and doubts. Though it was only Thomas who demanded to see and touch Jesus' wounds before he would believe, it was not only Thomas who doubted but all of them. This is truly understandable. If we saw someone who died a terrible death, been declared dead, buried, and then come back to life after three days, we surely would be terrified and in doubt with shock. I don't know of anyone who has seen a ghost. I have never seen a ghost. But if that every happened where someone came out of the grave and alive, I would for the first time believe I was seeing a ghost.

So these things may become new to you, even though you may have read this portion of scripture before, heard it before, and even heard similar sermons before. Instead of us focusing on doubting Thomas, we should realize that understandably it was hard for all to believe Jesus rose from the dead after such a horrible death and being in the sealed tomb for 3 days. Not only for a lack of oxygen could no one survived the tomb, but they Jesus was killed on the cross. They also knew his body was prepared for burial by embalming it with 100 pounds mixture of myrrh and aloes (John 19:39 NRSV). The point of revisiting all of this is to say that Jesus was surely dead. So believing he came back to life

was not something easy for the disciple or anyone. They surely thought they were seeing a ghost, and for good reasons.

Today's sermon is titled "New Creations in Christ." I used this title, though it may not seem fitting at first, because we get a glimpse of what will happen to us when we go to heaven. Though our old bodies will have returned to dust and to the earth, Jesus showed the disciples and all who saw him after his resurrection that he had a new body that was not bound by normal human or physical rules. Yet, it was like the body he once had, the body we live in now. By allowing the disciples touch him, they knew Jesus' body was real and like their own bodies. Yet, because he appeared literally out of nowhere in the locked room the disciples were gathering, they also learned his new body was able to travel like nothing else could. At the same time, Jesus' new body could enjoy food as well. Simply put, Jesus reveals to us today that the new body we will receive one day will never die again, will not know suffering or pain, and can also enjoy the things that God intended from the beginning which includes physical touch the enjoyment of life's delights such as eating food.

Many miss these ways in which Jesus tells us today, as he told the disciples around 2,000 years ago, that we should have more faith, hope, courage, and love because of what we know by what Jesus did in allowing his disciples to touch and to eat with him.

We also know that the disciples were never left alone, even after Jesus ascended into heaven. In Luke's account of what happened after the resurrection, we are told that Jesus says that they would be clothed with power from on high. We all know that we are given the gift of God's Holy Spirit as believers and followers of Jesus Christ.

Even now as we take a closer and deeper look at the events of the day Jesus rose from the dead, we can see and learn more than before. Jesus opened the eyes and minds of the disciples, transforming their minds and hearts. In this sense, they were being made new, new creations! They continued to be made new creations in Christ by the power and presence of God's Holy Spirit living in them, that we know they received in part before Jesus' resurrection, when he resurrected, and the day we call Pentecost.

The purpose of reading and revisiting the events of Jesus' resurrection is to see the true change that happens to all when they place their faith in Christ, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit; a change that happens we live, worship, and witness to the Good News we have in Christ to share with all!

We are transformed and new creations because of what we know in Christ, what we have experienced as followers of Christ, and how we experience that we are loved, forgiven, saved and called to proclaim the Good News in every way possible.

Consider the first disciples of Christ who were persecuted, arrested, abused and many who were killed, and all those who were persecuted from those early church days and to this very day. They were transformed and new creations in Christ so that they could live with the joy of knowing that they had the gift of salvation and eternal life, with a body that would never die again, would never know pain again, and would also experience the joys of life without the limitations. That gave them the ability to persevere with joy, even at the most difficult of times. And so can we when we fix our eyes on Jesus and the gifts and promises he gives to us.

We can live as new creations, being transformed by the renewing of our minds, when we look to Jesus, learn again and new things when reading again and again about his life, what he taught, and how he loved.

I end with saying how our minds can be shaped and change by what we allow to enter our minds, what we focus on, and what we repeat in thoughts, words and actions. Therefore, seek first the kingdom of God, put first Christ in your life, and allow for God to transform your mind and continue to make you grow as new creations in Christ. Do not let the negative, the lies of Satan, or anything else that doesn't help build you and others up in Christ consume your mind and life. It does not matter how young or old you are. We are all able to continue to grow and bear fruit as followers of Christ through the power of prayer, singing, worship, words of encouragement and affirmation, and so many other ways that all add up to the work Christ has for us to do for the love of God and the love of others.

Remember that we are all new creations in Christ, and everything we do are acts done unto God, acts that are our spiritual act of worship. So wake up with joy, even when it's difficult, doing it for the love of God and others. Do the seemingly insignificant tasks with joy knowing they are all done unto God. Do everything as if you are doing it for Christ himself. This is how we live as transformed and new creations in Christ.

God is never finished with his wonderfully creative work in each of us. So remember what Christ did when he helped the disciples not fear, to have faith, and to have such amazing comfort and joy knowing that Jesus was truly alive with a body that was intended for us from the beginning. Amen.

This Week's Joys and Prayer Requests:

Pastor Taek's mom who has been battling cancer since September of 2020 has recently been declared cancer-free by doctors. We are thankful for everyone's prayers. And we pray she stays cancer-free.

Please pray for friends of Tim Bodenmiller, Mike Ledesma, whose son Dave is suffering with COVID. Dave is in a drug induced coma, on a ventilator, and will start dialysis today to remove swelling. He is in a very fragile state and needs all your prayers. Dave is in his early 40's with a wife and 2 children (12 & 8).