

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

You Gotta Show Up

Gospel Lesson

Luke 24:36-49 (NRSV)

³⁶While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look 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." ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹Yet for all their joy they were still disbelieving and wondering, and he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then 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." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And 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."

Bible/Sermon Focus

During this series we have been thinking about evangelism. We have talked about what images and ideas come to mind when we consider our experiences with this word. Evangelism comes from the Greek word euangellion (εὐαγγέλιον). This word, euangellion, translates in English to evangelical. In biblical times a euangellion was an official *big* announcement, made by the state. These were usually about military or political victories. Euangellions were *good news* or *gospel*. (Gospel means good news.)

One of these euangellions from the time of Jesus, coming from Caesar Augustus states, "...the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good news that came through him to the world."

This quote, along with others from historical records sounds strikingly similar to the first line of the first Gospel written down. The Gospel of Mark starts with the words, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ."

The hearers of Mark's Gospel would definitely have heard the similarity. Mark clearly sets up this good news, this euangellion, of Jesus (the Son of God) the same way Caesar Augustus (son of the Gods) does. And here we have the contrast that would set the entire world on a new historical course.

Who is really King? Whose kingdom do you want to be a part of? Whose good news is actually good? The Jesus movement, from the beginning was a counter-cultural way of living and being

in the world. And these early Christians lived into that difference. They started the first orphanages. People of different economic classes, who were born of different religious and cultural backgrounds shared their possessions and broke bread together. These acts were threatening to the empire. The Caesars and the Roman Empire used fear and violence to spread their kingdom. Jesus and the Triune God used/uses love and peace within a diverse community.

And so should we. In our scripture for today we have yet another reminder that Jesus isn't in the fear mongering business. To witness the resurrected Christ is to witness to the God of peace. To be in relationship with Christ is to be in relationship with a body that is wounded and understands human suffering, and the delight and joy of community.

And it is in our relationship with Jesus and with each other that the good news of God lives. That even under the thumb of an empire, God can make community and bring life where there was no life. In the midst of violent regimes of power, peace is possible between us. This is the good news. And we, the body of Christ, are called to live as the good news. We are called to show up for each other and for our neighbors in a way that the empire could never. In a way of grace, inspired by the Spirit, following Jesus the Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. If someone looked at your life today would they witness to the good news of Christ?
2. How do the insights about the history of the Gospel and evangelism effect how you understand evangelism and your faith?
3. Where do you see the juxtaposition between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God, today?
4. How better can the body of Christ better hold its diversity and its peace?
5. How do we better "show up" for each other and for God?

Prayer

Risen Savior, you who walk with peace. Gather us in to be your body. Help us to be your good news in this world. Teach us to invite others to come along with us and with you on this journey of making all things new. Amen.

"Maybe cognitive dissonance is the only way to set us up for hearing about what God is doing, because when it comes down to it, nothing else in the gospels meet our expectations either. As odd as they are, the first few verses of the first gospel tell us a lot about what all the gospels have in store." -Nadia Bolz-Weber