

April 18, 2021
Third Sunday of Easter

“Real Life”

Luke 24:36-49

I think most people have finally learned their lesson, but looking at Facebook I know that at least a few still haven't. A decade or so ago when social media was coming into widespread use a lot of people made a big mistake. They went at Myspace or Facebook thinking that everything they wrote and posted online was somewhere out there in virtual reality computer land and wasn't really public and didn't have any impact on real life. So they posted nasty, stupid, offensive, criminal or other dumb stuff. Then they found out the hard way that social media is the most public thing you do, it never goes away, and it very much affects your real life.

Employers or potential employers, possible romantic interests, family and friends look up and look at your online life and make decisions and judgment calls based on what they see. Social media is not a thing out in the ether. It's real and has consequences in your real life.

The risen Christ says to His disciples, *“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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.”* In last week's Gospel reading He told Thomas to actually stick his fingers in the holes made by the nails and spear! And here when they're still disbelieving Jesus eats some broiled fish before them...again proving He is the true, physical and living human being and God Jesus Christ—because ghosts don't eat fish.

After that He *“opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”* and later on there is the whole Pentecost event when the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles in power. But the very first thing Jesus wants to make sure they know is that He is really, physically alive—that He isn't some type of spirit hanging out in the ether.

Why is this so critically important?

Well, first off, it's important because this is our resurrection also. St. Paul writes, *“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”* Jesus' physical resurrection is the guarantee of a physical resurrection to eternal life for all who believe on His name. Our divine brother in human flesh lives and reigns for eternity and has promised us *“I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”* We physically will one day be in His physical presence in paradise.

This important to know and believe, especially when facing the death of those you love or your own demise. There is a lot we don't know about life after death, but one thing you can count on—you will be you again; physical you again, without the sin, without the pain and sorrow, somehow supernaturally transformed in Christ's glory—but you will be you, body and soul, forever in and with Jesus! This is great hope in a world that is passing away. Christ's physical resurrection is also your resurrection.

But Jesus' priority of making sure the disciples knew that He was truly, physically risen from the dead and there with them, not some ghost or spirit just haunting them, is very important for us as we sojourn through this passing-away world. Jesus promised, *“I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* What Jesus is it that is with us? Some kind of other-worldly spectre, hovering just beyond our ability to see in the dimension of ghosts, spirits and angels? Or is the flesh and blood Jesus, the real God/man, present in our lives?

I think our fallen nature wants Him to be a ghost. A spirit is other-worldly and doesn't really have any claim on us here. A ghost just isn't all there; that's why it's a ghost. If we

consider Jesus in such a fashion, it's really easy to think we're getting away with things in life, that our sins and disobedience really aren't having a real impact because Jesus, the Savior and One coming in judgment, He's here but not *really* here. He's just kind of in the ether, the spiritual world. Here in real life, that's a life apart...from Him.

No. Jesus is of this life. He is a human being, a living human being, an of-this-created-realm human being. He may be ascended to the right hand of the Father, but He is most definitely of this human life—your human life. Moreover, He is the most important thing of this human life!

Yet we treat Him kind of like that wrong thinking about social media. But instead of being out in the virtual-computer world, He's in some sort of spiritual-heavenly world. And like we think our ill-thought postings would never come back to bite us, we start thinking that Jesus will always stay out there in the ether, and my life here and what I do with it will never be His concern.

But this life you're living today? It's the very life He died and rose to redeem! This body and soul you fool yourself into thinking is yours? They're His! *"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as his is."* What He is, is flesh and blood human being and He is so for the purpose of saving your physical person out of sin and death and into eternal life!

If you reject Him, push Him off into some other realm so you can have your life of sin all to yourself, on the day He appears in the flesh it won't be pretty for you, because He will let you keep the life you've chosen—a forever where the Savior and all His blessings are absent, out of sight, in some surreal nether realm the preachers called paradise.

To save you from such a fate Jesus continues to come to you physically, in the flesh. No, He's not tapping you on the shoulder every time you start stepping off the path of holiness. Don't we wish?

But He gave us the washing of Holy Baptism. True, most of us don't remember ours. But we know that we were once physically washed into Jesus' death and resurrection. We know the effectiveness of the real water combined with God's Word still today does what God promises—renewal and salvation.

He gives us Himself, physically, in, with and under the bread and the wine—tactile salvation we can touch and taste, reminding us we do indeed have His very presence with us in this life—a truth that heals and strengthens us in our sojourn here.

And maybe it's a stretch, maybe not, but when true preachers and the brothers and sisters in the faith speak the Word to one another, it's still God's Word. It is hitting your physical eardrums. The Lord is speaking to you here, now, in this life. Jesus is here, now, with you, in the "real world" doing His salvation thing to you.

The worst thing you can do is consider yourself to have a "virtual" savior, a Jesus somehow separated from reality, just hanging out on your heavenly social media where you goof around with Him in the spiritual until it's time to come back and get busy in the real world. If you think life apart from Him is what is "real" then God help you because on the day of your death that world ends.

"He is risen!" means Jesus has risen to life in your world and He lives and reigns here, now and into forever. He reigns with salvation and life for all who receive Him and the grace He brings to the here and now, the "real" world to which He belongs as a human being and which belongs to Him as Divine Creator.

Don't make the foolish mistake of thinking there is a separation between the temporal and eternal realities when it comes to Christ Jesus. All of it is His and He dwells in all. And especially for you, because you need Him here, He reigns in your physical world and delivers His gifts of His real self here for your salvation.

So just be His child here and know that real life, is life in him.

Amen.