

“Broken Bread for Broken Dreams”

Introduction: How is your hope today? In our look, last Sunday, at the resurrection of Jesus, we considered the importance of his post-resurrection appearances as Paul describes them in his first letter to the church in Corinth:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also . . . (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

What strikes me about this list, as we said last week, is that most of those whom Paul mentioned were still alive at the date of his writing. So, if his readers were wondering about this incredible, earth-shattering, unbelievable event of the resurrection of Jesus, there were numerous eyewitness – people to whom the risen Jesus had appeared – with whom they could check it out.

What almost strikes me even more about this list is who is *not* on it, who the risen Jesus did *not* appear to! He did not appear to those who had arrested him on false charges, mocked him, spat upon him, whipped him, and nailed him to the cross. How difficult it must have been not to seek out and spit upon these folks who had spit upon him! But instead, Jesus chose to appear, and spend time with, those who were drowning in a sea of discouragement and despair. As we’ll hear this morning, he came to those who had a story of broken dreams and filled them with his story of broken bread. [READ]

I. A Story of Broken Dreams

A. I think it’s safe to say that this pair that we meet on the road leading away from Jerusalem had been on a roller coaster of emotions in recent days. One could safely say it had probably been the most traumatic weekend of their lives. Coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, there was no longer anything to celebrate. On Friday they, along with many others, had witnessed the painful and humiliating death of their beloved leader, teacher, and friend. On Saturday, they had observed the sabbath by sitting with each other in unimaginable grief. And now, on Sunday, they had begun the 7-mile trek back to their home. A rumor had begun to circulate that Jesus had been seen alive, but it seemed like more of a hoax than anything else and so it seemed best to return home and begin to figure out what their new normal might be.

B. As they were trudging along, a traveler came up alongside and fell into step with them. Perhaps they were too filled with grief to see him clearly. Or perhaps it was that in his resurrected state, Jesus had a bit of a different look about him. Either way, when he asked what they had been talking about, and seemed willing to listen, they didn’t hesitate to give voice to their shattered dreams. This fellow Jesus, they thought, they had hoped, had come to be the great liberator of the Jewish nation. He had come, they had hoped, to rescue the descendants of Abraham from the oppression of the Roman empire and lift them back into world prominence, making their lives better in the process.

But everything they had hoped for had gone horribly wrong. Instead of doing something to them, this Jesus allowed the religious leaders and Roman soldiers to do whatever they wanted to him. What kind of Messiah would not fight back, they wondered. Their dream of what the kingdom of God would look like was not turning out how they had imagined it. The vision that had moved them to give up fishing and tax collecting and whatever else to follow this Jesus had evaporated. “We had hoped...”

C. How would you finish that sentence? Where might hope be waning for you? Maybe, as a parent, you’ve lost hope for your children, ranging from will they ever find a house they can afford to will they ever come to faith in Jesus? Maybe you’ve lost hope in our democracy, as our political discourse becomes increasingly about the love of power rather than the power of love. Maybe you’ve lost hope in the church, as its influence in our culture seems to be diminishing and as the next generation wonders about the trustworthiness of religious institutions. Maybe you’ve lost hope in your growth as a disciple of Jesus, as you find yourself unable to break free from sinful patterns in your life. Importantly, it’s in the midst of our stories of broken dreams, of lost hope, that Jesus shares his larger story of broken bread.

## II. A Story of Broken Bread

A. He does so as this pair invites him to stay for a meal once they’ve reached their home. The table, we’ve notice, is the place where Jesus does his best work! When he wants to explain what he’s all about, he gives us a meal. And at that meal, as they sit down together, Jesus moves from guest to host, taking bread, blessing it, breaking it, and giving it to them. It opens their eyes. They’ve seen this before. They recognize Jesus and begin to taste how his death and resurrection have fulfilled all that God has been working toward since the days of Moses and the Prophets, working to heal the brokenness of our relationship with himself, with ourself, with our neighbor, and with creation, as he becomes broken for us and begins to make all things new.

B. At that table, hope was in the process of being restored, broken dreams were in the process of being re-visioned. Though the road of life would still be challenging, the light was not just at the end of the tunnel but, because of the resurrection, right there in the middle of it, Jesus walking with us. As Psalm 23 reminds us, it’s often in the valley of the shadows where we meet him.

In light of this, and my suggestion last week that we need both a crucifix and an empty cross to fully speak to the events and meaning surrounding Easter, I was struck by a question that a writer named Mark Galli asks in a Good Friday reflection: Could it be that Jesus is still on the cross *and* that he is also risen? By which Galli means, is Christian faith about transcending suffering or is it about weaving it, along with hope, into the meaning of our lives? I think that perhaps this picture Luke gives us of the risen Jesus still breaking bread conveys some of the truth of the latter.

Where are you on the road of lost hope? Where have your dreams become broken? As you make your way to the table this morning, might you invite Jesus to come alongside and walk with you? When you get there, allow Jesus to be your host, to take bread, bless it, to acknowledge your brokenness and your suffering, and then give you his hope. As you return to your seat, ask him to keep walking with you once you leave this place, and continue to fill your story of broken dreams with his larger and healing story of broken bread.