

Easter 3-B, 2009

Luke 24: 36-48

April 26, 2009

Title: Resurrection and Witness

Grace and peace.....

Anybody old enough to remember the great Bolo? He was one of the stars of Championship Wrestling in the 1950s from Charlotte. And on most Saturday afternoons, he appeared on TV. The Great Bolo was one of the bad guys. He wore a mask; he was out of shape—hadn't been to a gym in years. But this bad person often won. He won by cheating. Here's what he did.

Bolo would get behind his opponent and pull out from his mask this small medal object, rub it on temple and the opponent would fall asleep. All of this in full view of the audience, but conveniently out of view of the official. He would slip the medal object back into his mask.

Once his opponent was asleep, the Bolo would pin him to the mat. Saturday, after Saturday, after Saturday, the same trick, resulting in the same outcome.

We know that stuff is fake; we also know that a diminished life is not, dulling us into a slumber. Long ago we viewed a video in which a psychologist suggested that at birth our hands and hearts are open; and in the course of our living hands and hearts begin to close and restrict. It's like being put into a slumber.

I feel that way sometimes upon coming home from the Coffee House. As you get to know some of the stories of our participants—the higher functioning participants who feel so out of place, who want to be “normal”—and those who are barely able to feed themselves—you can feel the weight of human need, and before you know it, you buckle under it,

you go into a kind of stupor and you just want to forget about it, retreat from it.

We could create a list of these things—

--job insecurity, pink slips, children leaving home, declining health, retirement delayed, week after week after week the diminishing rub on the temple slowly settling you in the easy chair for a long, life long nap.

We know this is not to be the description of our lives. We are children of the resurrection, we are bound up in the one who is alive, set free from the security of the grave.

The promise that Jesus lives is a promise to be lived, to bet your life on. There is this power set loose in the world at Easter, a power that won't leave us alone.

Jesus comes to a fear diminished community and says 'Peace be with you.' That's the first thing he says; as our gospel concludes Jesus is saying to these same fearful disciples "You are witnesses."

What emboldens Jesus to call these disciples to be His witnesses.? First Jesus, the resurrected one, shows his wounds. Here's how you recognize Jesus and also calling us to realize you don't pass through here without being wounded. Embracing your woundedness is also embracing the presence of Jesus in this wounded life.

What an act of peace for Jesus, the resurrected one, to sit down for a meal. He ate in their presence. Broiled fish...whatever it is to share in the common gifts that sustain. To not ignore the simple, everyday graces. Here is Jesus.

What an act of peace for Jesus to open to us the scriptures. For in him God's plans and purposes are brought to fruition.

Abby Beebe has been witnessing to Jesus' peace. During Lent and Easter Abby has been giving us painted crosses. I have this one –boldly

painted, brightly arrayed in rich colors. At the top of this cross Abbe placed a gold crown.

Last week Abby brought in for Lois Walker and Brenda Dozer this cross. Certainly for two people it needs to be larger. And right here where the two pieces of the cross come together...

.....Abby pasted on a picture of Big Bird!

What a profound witness! It's not what you expect. Through the mind of a child Big Bird belongs on Jesus cross. God's love right there for a bumbling over sized yellow bird.

God's powerful love for.....what picture is pasted right there? Shouldn't we put our picture there? A picture of deepest wounds. How about a picture of the person who troubles us? A picture of the map of Baghdad, a picture of what ever dulls the life out of us.

Children of the resurrection, it is essential for us to know that we don't go to church....we are the church. The ongoing incarnation of Jesus occurs through us—His mighty deeds of repentance and forgiveness are extended through us.

Easter this is time to name and claim the astonishing power and peace of Jesus. Resurrection power—freed to act when we're not sure; resurrection power—freed to be wrong and not bear the weight of that forever; resurrection power—freed to not give up; resurrection power—freed from death's dull sleep.

Look at our 5 year plan through resurrected eyes.

- Christ develop a culture of bible fluency here
- Christ will expand our retreat opportunities
- Christ will give us a mission minister
- Christ will continue to give us seminary interns
- Christ will send us out to get to know our neighbors

--Christ will empower us to increase our generosity b 1% annually

Picture this plan at the center of Jesus' cross.

There are many ways we can be dulled into sleep. Jesus will not have it.

He walks into closed lives and offers peace—a peace amidst woundedness, a peace that plops down to share a meal, a peace that overflows in the scriptures—

I'm glad he takes us this seriously. Just ask Abby Beebe.