

Easter 3 4/18/21
Luke 24:36-49 B

**BUT THEY WERE STARTLED AND FRIGHTENED AND THOUGHT
THEY SAW A SPIRIT.**

In the year of our Lord 2014, we made a trip across the pond to visit England and France. In London, we visited Westminster Abbey, which is the large, cathedral church. It's typically where the royals get married. When the king or queen of England is crowned, it's at Westminster Abbey. And I found it fascinating that dead people are buried all over inside of the church. For centuries, hundreds of years, they buried their dead, quite literally, inside their churches. Queen Elizabeth I is interred right next to her half-sister, Queen Mary I. But you didn't have to be a king or queen to be buried inside the church, there are princes and princesses, poets, writers, musicians, prime ministers. In fact, right inside the Great West Door of the Abbey, the Unknown Warrior -- England's version of the tomb of the unknown soldier -- is entombed right beneath the floor.

If you want to find the grave of King Henry VIII -- he of the six wives fame -- you would have to go to St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. If you watched Prince Philip's funeral yesterday, it was at St. George's Chapel. And I mean quite literally, as you walk down the main aisle to the altar, you look down and inscribed on a brick it reads, "Here lies King Henry VIII".

Bear with me for being nostalgic for a minute, but you don't have to make a trip across the pond to see graves, do you? As you are leaving church this morning, just look across the street. As you drive home to the ranch, there is a very good chance you will see a cemetery.

And, honestly, I don't need to remind you that those cemeteries are there, because that is where you friends and families, your loved ones, are buried. We miss them. We want them to be with us here, today, this very minute. We see those graves, and think, "that's just the way it is." Some of those graves in England have been there for thousands of years. That's just the way it is.

In the worship services of God's House, we confess the Christian faith with the three Creeds. And in each of them, we confess this, "I believe in the resurrection of the body". JESUS ROSE, AND THAT MEANS THAT YOU ARE GOING TO RISE FROM THE DEAD.

But we just find that so hard to believe. Remember last week? Jesus rises from the grave and comes to the disciples as they are gathered behind locked doors. Thomas wasn't there, and he goes on that diatribe about seeing Jesus and placing his hand and his finger in His wounds, or "I WILL NOT BELIEVE". So, eight days later, Jesus comes again and shows Thomas His wounds, tells Him to put His finger and his hand in His wounds, and says, "Do not disbelieve, but believe" (Jn 20:27).

The disciples on the road to Emmaus in our lesson this morning, they couldn't believe. They were thinking like human beings do – dead people stay dead. Buried and in the grave. They had high hopes that Jesus was going to the mighty leader who would drive the Romans out of their homeland and restore the nation of Israel to glory and wealth. But the Romans killed him. They heard the reports of the women that His grave was empty. And when Jesus made Himself known with His words, "Peace be with you," their first thought was not that He was risen and alive, as He said He would be the third day; No, they were startled and frightened, and thought they saw a ghost!

Why? Why, why? Haven't you ever seen a grave? Dead people don't rise!

It is so natural for us to simply believe that dead people don't rise and that our dead bodies will never live again because we have so bought into this GREAT lie of the devil ... you know it -- Death is a natural part of life.

You should boo at that. Let's do that again – and I want to hear you boo. Ready? Death is a natural part of life. {boo}

Why do you think I wanted you to boo at that lie of the devil? Because you hear it all the time! And I want you to remember to boo (maybe not out loud) every time you hear it this crass, gross lie of the devil.

The Bible teaches us that death is most certainly not a natural part of life. Rather, the Bible says this, "The wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). Let's go back to fair Eden's garden. Remember, God made a mudpie and breathed His life into it. When God created Adam, did He create Him to die? The answer is: Of course not! God created us to be with Him forever and ever, without end; that we would simply enjoy and have fun in the life He had given us. But, sin came. And with sin, came death.

The Good News for you, Dear Child of God, is that your Father in heaven does not accept death as a natural part of life. He conquers and overcomes it in Jesus Christ.

God sent His Son into this world to die. He took on all of your sins of thought, word, and deed, carried them to the cross, and died as the wages for them all. The 3rd day, He rose again, bringing life and immortality to life.

So, yes, at the time of death, the soul of the believer is immediately with Jesus in heaven. But, we must ever remember that this is temporary. God never created our souls and bodies to be apart. So, on the last day, the day Jesus comes again to judge the living and the dead, He will raise

the dead, transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body and your soul and your body will be reunited to live in the full enjoyment of being with Jesus forever.

That's why Job, even in the midst of the misery of disease and grief, made that marvelous confession of faith, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25-26)." He confessed that because he believed in the resurrection of the body.

And, this is Good News for us who know what a cemetery is, because those we love and miss so very much are buried in them. The resurrection of the body means that we will not only see our loved ones again; we will hear their voice; we will touch them; we will feel their skin and be warmed by their breath as we embrace them.

Maybe, the best way for us to think of this is this way: How many of you have ever stayed at a hotel? Whether it was a Motel 6, Holiday Inn Express, or a 5-star Westin resort, you stayed there, but did you live there? The answer is ... of course not! Think of a cemetery as nothing but a hotel, Dear Child of God. Yes, you may stay there, sleep there, but it is only temporary. The day is quickly coming when Christ will come again in all His glory and "all who are in the tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out," (Jn 5:28-29). And, in body and soul, we will be forever with Jesus.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

ALLELUIA!