

Luke 24:36b-48  
Still Wondering  
4.15.18

This past summer I hung out with a lot of kindergarteners. I was a camp counselor at the YWCO, watching movies, swimming in the pool, playing on the playground, normal days in the life of a six year old... in my mind we were all hanging out, and I always looked forward to hearing what they had to say. I got really used to the ways kindergarteners tell stories. Zero hesitation, full blast, every detail comes right out unfiltered. Whether you asked for it or not, you're locked into a stream of consciousness tale about how amazing the world is.

Usually I was in a strange position where I knew exactly what they're trying to tell me because it was something I explained to them beforehand. On one of our field trips, we went to LegoLand. And at LegoLand there's a 4D movie theatre, one of those theaters that uses smells and 3-d images, and eventually squirts you with a little bit of water, and it was my task to warn the kindergarteners that they'd get wet. Just a little bit.

And I knew it wouldn't be a problem for most of them. It'd be funny, it was supposed to be funny. But once we found our seats and the movie started, and the little lego man on the screen flew under a virtual waterfall, and all the kids screamed at the top of their lungs, as water shot out from the back of the chair in front of them, there was a little pandemonium. And of course there were also a few tears and laughs and worries, and as we walked out of the theatre every six year old had to share their version. Sound effects and all.

So I listened to them tell of the ways they experienced the movie, and I listened to them explain it to one another, describing the best and most terrifying moments all the way home.

Kids may tell a stories faster than their mouths can get them out, but we all tell these kinds of stories. We recount the most exciting parts of our day, even to those who experienced it with us. We take whole conglomerations of feelings and distill them into enough convincing words for others. It's a game of proof building, and meaning making.

The group walking along the road to Emmaus may as well be a school bus filled with kindergarteners. Each one telling the others about the trip they all just went on. Luke drops us right into that sort of excitement as the disciples walk along and argue over just what happened to a Jesus who is no longer in the tomb. It's a world where the disciples knew ahead of time that Jesus would die and rise on the third day. A world where they got the warning of what was to come, but when it happened they lost all sense of what they knew and what they were supposed to know, and they argued.

But while they're arguing about what happened to Jesus, they all go to the same house for dinner, and Jesus actually shows up. Right in the middle of their conversation with his ears burning red. And we don't have to imagine the disciples are in a business meeting or using perfect parliamentary procedure to decide what the next motion is. They're not *that* Presbyterian just yet. No, they're just like us. They're those who followed Jesus and connected to his ministry. They gather with each other, just like we gather in a church today, to make sense of a resurrection story that defies the words we've already created.

And elements of Luke's account of their dinner come across like a ghost story. Like it was meant to be told by the fire, not from a pulpit, with a jump scare waiting around the corner as Jesus just appears in the room.

But there are also elements of deep sadness, and confusion. Our text tells us that the disciples had no words for Jesus,, that they were *startled and frightened*, and that they *still did not believe it because of joy and amazement*. Startled and frightened and joyful and amazed and disbelieving. This range of words reminds us how complicated it can be to define our experience.

Like the disciples, we can hear that Christ was risen and we can see that Christ stands before us, but in the back of our minds is a little word. But. Jesus may be raised, but, we still miss our friends. We still miss our parents, and our grand parents, and our brothers, and sisters. We still feel loss. Jesus is risen but, we still have to elect good folks to help the community confront and inequality and injustice. Those dangers don't disappear after the resurrection.

Startled and frightened and joyful and amazed...I wonder if we'd have any other words to offer a Jesus that just, shows up.

Because there are moments like these in the middle of crisis. Times where pain cuts us a little too deep, and it numbs us. When loss tears out a little more of our heart than we thought it would. When relationships fail and people leave and life changes and take it all on the nose and say "yep, I guess that's how it is." We settle into the pain.

And the disciples settled into the pain of losing Jesus. It's hard to just turn that pain off. Someone can offer it all back to you, the way it was before, **just** like it was before, but its not the same. The pain is felt, it happened. Jesus can show up in the room, but how do you accept the best gift after the greatest loss? What words are there to offer?

The disciples' mixture of joy and amazement and fear looks to Jesus and says 'Oh we see you, but what have we suffered to get here?'

So the disciples think he's fake. A ghost. So he eats a little fish, shows them his wounds, invites them into his company. He asks them to *perceive* him. He says look! Touch! Look again! I really am here right now. Let me meet you where you are.

Our text tells us that Christ *opened their minds so they could understand Scripture*. Jesus invites them back into creativity. To experience Holy Words again, from the perspective of a risen God who conquered death. To perceive the reign of a risen God in this world. To see the hope through the pain.

The disciples don't say anything else in the Gospel of Luke. There is no resolution of their joy or amazement or disbelief or fright. Those feelings never go away, we're all still wondering about those.

But if my summer camp kindergarteners were there, they'd have something to say. They would dive back into the wonderful stream of consciousness and say 'did you see what he did? When he ate that fish? And then he let us touch him! And we felt wounds and it was a little gross but thats okay because then Rebecca started crying

and that made me kind of scared...and on and on and on. They'd witness, they'd be amazed.

When Jesus pops in, we're all invited to perceive in a slightly different way. To see the hope along with the hurt. To be amazed.

One of my first days at camp I wouldn't let one, particular boy swim without a life jacket. I wouldn't even let him take the swim test to prove he didn't need a life jacket. I knew he couldn't swim, I could tell by looking at him. But he was a little rebel and he jumped in the pool anyway and proved me wrong. He could swim. He was one of only a handful of kindergarteners that could swim. I can hear him now, begging to be perceived for who he really is.

When we perceive people, with all the reality and hope that they bring, we believe in them. We let ourselves be amazed by them like kids ready to tell you every single detail. Whether that's kindergarteners or family or neighbors or Jesus. We let them feel like ghosts sometimes, relationships to be ignored, and we brush them aside. But if you hear them out, if you perceive them, they offer you something beautifully brand new and unexpected.

Jesus pops in from time to time. That's how we interact with a resurrected God. Will we have any words to offer a God who just, shows up?