

Rev. Derek Fairman

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter B

The Lord Jesus' disciples were afraid after the Resurrection. In the Gospel today, the Lord Jesus asks His disciples, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?" The Gospel tells us that the disciples were terrified. They could not believe what they were seeing. In their initial opinion, they thought that seeing Him again was a physical impossibility. They thought that somehow this vision was a trick or something to frighten them. It couldn't really be Him.

The disciples certainly had their doubts. The Lord asked if they had anything to eat. They did have a piece of baked fish, and He ate it. The Apostles saw Him eat the piece of fish that they had, and that is the truth that they testify to, and that we hear in the Gospel this day. That is what our faith is based on: what the Apostles actually witnessed for themselves. That is why the Lord Jesus commissioned them to testify to what they had seen: because they actually saw Him.

Now, the Lord Jesus asks the disciples why they are troubled, because He had predicted that everything would happen as it did. The Lord Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scripture. He showed them that the Scriptures had foretold His suffering, death and Resurrection. The disciples needed to understand the Scriptures, because the Scriptures were what they knew best. That is the way that God had spoken to His people.

In the midst of something that was new and unfamiliar, the disciples could rely upon something that was familiar. In the midst of their fears, the Lord used the Scriptures to show them that what was happening and what would happen <sup>need</sup> ~~is~~ not to be feared. If the disciples were to be witnesses, they must overcome their fear and testify to what they had seen.

That is the problem that the disciples face. They must believe in the Lord Jesus, and testify to His Resurrection, even to the ends of the earth. That is what our faith rests on: the witness of the Apostles. It was the Apostles to whom the Lord Jesus appeared after His Resurrection. The Apostles, as we heard in the Gospel, were initially terrified, and yet it is their witness that has been handed on to us.

We think about the Lord's presence in our own lives today. Granted, we are not witnesses of the Lord's Resurrection as were these disciples. However, the Lord Jesus comes into our lives, and He comes to bring the light of His Resurrection to our moments of pain and sadness. He comes to bring the light of His Resurrection into our souls.

The Lord's presence in our lives can make us nervous, and sometimes we might wonder if we can really trust the light of the Lord's Resurrection. We might be afraid of what it would be like to follow the light that the Lord gives us. We may not be afraid of seeing the Lord as His disciples saw Him after His Resurrection, but nevertheless the Lord's presence can sometimes make us uncomfortable. There are those in our families or among our friends or neighbors who are quite uncomfortable with the Lord Jesus too.

Yet despite whatever doubts or fears can enter our minds, the Lord Jesus will overcome them all. The Lord Jesus asks us today, "Why are you troubled?" The Lord Jesus invites us to trust in Him. The Lord Jesus invites us to have confidence in His victory. The Lord Jesus invites us to let go of our fears. The Lord Jesus also invites us to find mercy in Him.

The Lord Jesus appears to the same apostles that had abandoned Him. Instead of bringing His wrath upon them, or making them feel more and more guilty about it, instead He comes to prepare them to spread the Good News of His Resurrection. He shares some of the fish that they had, as He had shared so many meals with them before. Again, He uses something familiar to alleviate their fears. He also shows them His good will towards them and His forgiveness.

Each year we recall the various Resurrection appearances that the Lord made to His disciples. The more that we hear about them in faith, the stronger our faith grows. If we want to have the faith and conviction of the Apostles, we must make the Resurrection a part of who we are. That is something that we may not want to do. We may be afraid of what the Lord is asking of us. We may not be ready to let go of our fears.

As we approach the altar this day, we ask the Lord to increase our faith in His Resurrection. We know that there are many things in our lives that make us afraid because we do not know what to make of them, and we do not know how to deal with them. That is true of our own interior lives. We can be afraid to let go of our usual ways of thinking. We can be afraid to let go of our usual ways of dealing with things. We may be afraid to let our faith grow. But if we are ready, the Lord Jesus can enter into our hearts and minds as He appeared to His disciples that day. When He enters our lives, it will be a source of comfort and strength for us.