

Take the Message Out

Text: Luke 24: 36b—48

The disciples are gathered together, talking about the things that have happened.

First, they have heard strange reports from some women. These women claimed that a messenger from God told them “not to look for the living among the dead.” Peter checked it out and it seemed to be true.

Next, two followers, breathless from rushing back to Jerusalem tell of their experience on the road to Emmaus. We had a conversation with a man who seemed to know nothing but then he seemed to know everything. We had a meal. He opened up the scriptures to us. We know Jesus has risen.

Now, Jesus stands in their midst and says, “Peace be with you.” Jesus asks for something to eat and then he “opens their minds to understand the scriptures.”

The reading from Luke is like a parable of the Church. We gather together and we talk about things that happened. We listen to stories and poems and lectures and editorials from the Bible and talk about what God has done for God’s people. We hear the stories of those who encountered the risen Christ and ponder what this means. Then Jesus comes and stands among us. We experience his presence through the opening up of scriptures, through the sharing of a meal, through a prayer, a song, through community. We experience the risen Christ and nothing seems the same.

The risen Lord affirms the past with these words: “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you . . . thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations.”

The risen Lord points the disciples to the future with these words, you are witnesses of these things! He is saying to the disciples, you are the ones who have experienced my presence among you. You have experienced the good news, the call to repentance and the forgiveness of sins. So take the message beyond your circle. Take the message out into Jerusalem and then into all the world.

The Church gathers. We listen to words about Jesus. Through parables, teachings and sermons, we are exposed to the good news that in Jesus Christ we receive the forgiveness and the power of God in our lives. This loving kindness compels us to want to repent

and seek new life. The Good News of the Gospel is opened up to us through the risen Christ and our lives are transformed.

And the risen Christ calls to us. Don't keep the Good News to yourselves. Take the message beyond your circle. Take the message out into _____ (*your town*) and then to the world, to all nations.

(Leaders: a paragraph could be included here to tell your congregation how your WMS group is going into your town and the world to share, teach and live the Gospel).

As we gather each Sunday, Jesus says to us, you are my witnesses. You are the messengers of the good news that repentance and forgiveness are free gifts. The Church exists for mission. Just like those first disciples we cannot huddle together enjoying our experience of the risen Lord. We are called to witness. We are called to a mission to get God's word around.

How could those huddling, frightened disciples fulfill such a charge? Jesus says, wait, stay here in Jerusalem for a while "until you are clothed from on high with power." The word for power here is "dynamis," from which we get the words "dynamic" and "dynamite." So, wait awhile, says Jesus. It won't be long until you'll be sent off with a power like dynamite, a power that will enable you to take the Good News from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. In 2006 we are the legacy of that dynamite explosion.

We are charged to go forth as witnesses of the risen Christ, who brought the good news of repentance and forgiveness. We have been given the mission to share the Good News. We have been given the mission to tell people in word and deed that there is freedom found in Jesus Christ—repentance and forgiveness brings joy and peace.

We do Christ's mission in our local congregations when we bring others into worship and fellowship where they might experience the risen Christ. We do Christ's mission when we give a cup of cold water in Christ's name. We are Christ's witnesses when we enable the church to send missionaries into communities to help the people bring healing and health into their lives, like our missions to Native peoples in Canada. Or when we enable the Church to train people to fight the HIV/AIDS endemic in Africa. And. . .

(Leaders: this is the place for you to mention specific mission projects—local or international—that are close to the hearts of your WMS group or your congregation)

The Church, like the disciples, huddles together frightened (maybe?), unsure (yes) and perplexed by the enormity of the responsibility given to us. But we, too, are given the power. We too are armed with dynamite-power to take the Good News into the world.

This image of dynamite is an exciting image. Think about what dynamite can do. If you drive through the Rocky Mountains you see the results of the power of dynamite. You see the side of a mountain blasted away, the face of the mountain changed to create new paths. Poetically then, dynamite can move mountains. You have seen images on TV of dynamite blasting through walls and barriers. Poetically then, dynamite can loose the bonds of the oppressor and set the prisoner free. When we wait, continually praying to God, for the dynamite to get the job done God's power will make us agents of freedom, justice and Christian living.

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