



SERMONS THAT WORK

Easter 3 (A)

[RCL] Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-3,10-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

Danger, Laughter

There is a very short story Alan Dugan wrote for *Poetry* magazine called “April.” It unequivocally describes spring in a cold climate.

April.

The old man in shining black, with the immense black umbrella, walked down the street like the younger brother of the shadow of death. Each house, as he passed, pulled down its shades, and each tree, as he passed, withdrew its buds. Then on the corner as the rain stopped, he stopped and walked back up the street, the shadow of death disappearing as he closed his overpowering umbrella. The buds popped out, the windows opened, as one bird sang and one child shouted, and all that was left was the black skeleton of the brother of the shadow of death to laugh at and yes, to stone.

Be careful, this is April. It might rain again and the shadow and its slapstick brother might move up and down the spring-bursting, bud-laden, totally confused street all afternoon singing, Danger, Laughter, Danger, Laughter.

The end.

In a cold climate, April is like that. Danger, laughter, danger, laughter. No wonder T.S. Eliot said that “April is the cruelest month.”

Life—in many ways—is April. To be human is to dance between laughter and danger and back again. It might rain again, and it might even sleet or snow, or it might be glorious. A catastrophe might befall you today or you might learn wonderful news. Or maybe even both. Laughter, Danger.

Welcome to the third Sunday of Easter.

Today we get to hear the last of the resurrection appearances appointed for the Easter season. Next Sunday will be what is often colloquially known as “Good Shepherd Sunday,” when all the readings

revolve around Jesus as the good shepherd. That Sunday is a little hinge point in the Easter season, with three Sundays before it and three Sundays after. (The last three Sundays of Eastertide, we will look towards Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit.)

Today's Gospel lesson is intent on proving that Jesus is not a ghost, and that the resurrection appearances are not some collective hallucination, either. Jesus knows that it's hard to believe that someone might come back from the dead, so—just like he did with Thomas—he offers concrete proof in the form of his body, alive and functioning. He eats in front of them.

In this famous story, two disciples meet someone they see as a stranger along the road to Emmaus. They invite him to their house, they feed him dinner, and they recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

It's wild how many of these resurrection appearances revolve around food—and people gathered around food. Jesus even makes the disciples breakfast on the seashore in John's gospel. As theology professor Don Saliers used to say to his students, "Jesus loved meals so much, he became one."

Eating—and even more than mere eating, *nourishment*—is a profoundly human thing. And that is the whole point.

Together, around tables and at the altar, we share laughter and danger and frustration and sadness and joy. This is what it is to be human. We disappoint each other and we make each other's day, sometimes in the same week, sometimes in the same hour. We make each other cry and we make each other rage, with regularity. This is what it means to share life, to share love, to be human. Laughter, danger, laughter, danger.

If there was irrefutable proof that Christ was raised from the dead, it is lost to history. But we can point to what Christ offers in the gospel lesson: his body. He offers it to the disciples on the walk to Emmaus, in the upper room—when he showed Thomas his hands and his side—and in every other resurrection appearance.

In the gospels, the proof of the resurrection is Christ's literal body. In our world, the proof is Christ's body the church. It is Christ's body, as we gather together, around the table, in all of our humanity.

So let us continue to share life here, together, as Christ's body.

Be careful, it is April. It might rain again and the shadow and its slapstick brother might move up and down the spring-bursting, bud-laden, totally confused street all afternoon singing, Danger, Laughter, Danger, Laughter.

Be careful, you are human. You live in a world that sings: laughter, danger, laughter, danger. But you do not live in this world alone. Christ who gathers us also shelters us, gives us to one another, and calls us his body.

Then, as now, Christ's body is the only proof that we need of resurrection.

April will not last. The buds will bloom, and summer will come. Resurrection shows itself in many ways.

Thanks be to God. *Amen.*

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