

Acts 3:12-19 and Luke 24:36B-48

I have had a chance to hug most of you...to hear from you...some surprise, some sadness...then, thankfully, I am hearing a lot of, "OK...we can do this!" If you did not get a letter explaining my retirement on August 12, please do take one from the front or in the social room.

You have been and are a terrific congregation, you are gifted in so many ways... and we are so fortunate to have wonderful guidance from the UCC... many, many thanks to the Rev. Kelly Gallagher who is here with us today! So for the next 4 months, we will support each other and look to the future with hope and faith!

I have searched today's lectionary readings to see how they might inform us at this time in our lives together! Here is what came up!

Let us be in prayer: Holy and Infinite God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts together, be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

After Easter, we have amazing stories of Jesus reappearing...in some way! And in one such instance, Jesus asks the disciples..."Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" And then he showed them that he was there.

Perhaps this story can show us that when any of us have doubts or fear, the Spirit of God is present there already! The disciples were so distraught at the absence of Jesus, their friend and inspiration, yet the Spirit of Christ appeared to them and said, "I am real....and to prove the realness of this Presence...he ate with them. Broiled fish... the King James Version says they also ate honeycomb together...the spiritual and the physical became one!

So might we experience the realness of Christ-Spirit, of Holy Love...here with us even now...in the sharing of food together, in our working to bring peace more fully into our lives and into this world! The disciples were doing what we all are doing...journeying, questioning, fearing, but also feeding and being fed, listening for and receiving God's call..."Peace be with you," Jesus said it again and again in these amazing reappearances...."Peace be with you....I am real...God's love for you will never leave you."

The Acts passage also has something for us now... Peter and John had performed a healing. ...They were not Jesus, but followers and still, the *love they shared*, had the ability to heal. This is profound. Others who followed, also had the touch...they also were filled with love that heals....and so are we, and so are you.

I have seen so many acts of loving kindness in these 10 years with you. Your efforts towards feeding people who struggle with enough funds for food...your efforts to support causes locally and in the world...your efforts to comfort those who are hurting with the tangible gift of cards and prayer shawls. Is this not similar to how the disciples offered fish and honeycomb?" You are saying, "Here, have a warm, beautiful shawl, a physical expression of the love of Christ! And it is received and cherished....and in this interaction, there is a kind of healing. You know this.

Loving kindness emits energy...a healing energy. You probably know about Dr. Emoto who observed the physical effect of words, prayers, and music on water? Incredible evidence that words...and emotions...matter! When words of love and healing and hope were addressed to ordinary water and then it was frozen, it made beautiful crystalized shapes. But when words of anger or hatred were projected, the symmetry fell apart and there was nothing beautiful in those water crystals.

Loving kindness...when allowed to flow through us from the Divine in all life...it is enough to heal our hurts and ease our doubts and fears. When Jesus reappeared to his friends... he asked them why they doubted the future...why were they afraid?

Peace be with you and me...loving kindness heals as we move on into the future surrounded by a real Presence of Infinite Love....Let us live into this belief!

I close with one of my new favorite poems by Mechthild of Magdaburg. She was a Christian mystic who was ostracized for her spiritual insights but wrote anyway...this was in the 1200's....amazing that her words find us here today...with relevance and truth.

Effortlessly,  
love flows from God into humankind,  
like a bird  
who rivers the air  
without moving her wings.  
Thus we move in God's world  
one in body and soul,  
though outwardly separate in form.  
As the Source strikes the note,

humanity sings---  
The Holy Spirit is our harpist,  
and all strings  
which are touched in Love  
must sound.

All strings, touched in love, must sound. Let us make a joyful noise...for the love of an infinite God!

Amen