

**Christ Episcopal Church**

**2 Emerson Street**

**East Norwalk,**

**Connecticut 06855-1330**

**3 Easter (B)**

**April 15, 2018**

**DRAFT**

**8 AM and 10 AM homilies**

**by the Rev. Joe Parrish**

**“Revive us again”**

**The Holy Gospel according to**

**Luke 24:36b-48**

While the disciples were telling how they had seen Jesus risen from the dead, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their

joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “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, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Risen Lord, comfort and strengthen our hearts that we may be your witnesses to those around us. Amen.

One of my wife’s business school professors spoke to her alumni class at their reunion. He said, ‘On January 3, 2007, I was walking across the campus when suddenly I died.’ He continued,

‘Fortunately someone near me saw that I had collapsed, and they also had learned how to use a cardiac defibrillator which had only recently been installed nearby.’ Within minutes someone else gave the professor CPR, then the defibrillator was used to restore his heart rhythm, which resuscitated him, another called 911, and within minutes, Emergency Medical Services arrived. They quickly got him to a hospital where his treatment was continued with the result that he had no cognitive loss—he was mentally as bright as he had been before

his heart attack. Everything worked perfectly that day, miraculously, even though his heart had stopped for four minutes. And that professor is still alive today and retired at age 76, and he was continuing to publish business research papers less than two years ago.

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2012/12/18/howard-stevenson-business-school/>

and

<https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=51738>

The crucified and dead Jesus on the other hand was not resuscitated; there was no one who knew what CPR was back then; the Roman soldier thrust his spear into Jesus' side, piercing into his chest cavity, with blood and water gushing out, proving Jesus was stone cold dead and rendering his body completely unable to be revived, even with a defibrillator. Jesus' life was over, period. However, three days later, Jesus rose from his tomb on the first Easter Day. In today's Gospel according to Luke, later that first Easter

day, to their complete amazement, Jesus stands among his disciples and shows them his hands and his feet. And to top it all off, in the Gospel scene we just read about, Jesus asked his disciples for a piece of broiled fish which he ate in their presence and thereby established the first Church Potluck. Thus, the Risen Lord could not be a vapor, nor a mirage, nor a hopeful dream, but a living, breathing human being. For forty days more days, based on Luke's timetable in Acts 1:3, the Risen Lord appeared to many more; St. Paul

recounts the risen Christ's appearance to over five hundred at one time in First Corinthians 15:6. Christ had indeed become fully and completely alive, though he had been dead in the stone cold tomb for three days.

Roman Catholic priest Andrew Greeley tells this story: Once upon a time the girls softball team of Mother Mary High School traveled across town to play the girls from St. Nicholas High School. Molly Whuppy, of course, was Captain of the team and starting pitcher.

Her record for three seasons was 105 and 2, and the two times she lost were when she was a freshman. Well, her mom and dad went to all the games and this time Molly permitted them to drive her to the game instead of going on the bus. YOU KNOW what happened. Her Dad's Mercedes had a flat tire and it took FOREVER to replace. Meanwhile at St. Nicholas, her team fell apart. The home team was not very good but since Mother Mary's went into TOTAL panic and dropped pop-ups and threw easy grounders ten feet over the first

baseman. ‘Without Molly, they wailed, we’ll lose.’ At the last of the fourth inning they were losing 8 to 0 and girls softball games go only seven innings. St. Nick's had the bases loaded and no outs. FINALLY, the Whuppy car appeared and Molly sauntered out, figuring that the coach and the kids would be furious at her. ‘Flat tire,’ she tried to explain. Then she realized that they were like totally panicked. ‘Cool it guys,’ she ordered. ‘We're not going to lose to these geeks.’ So, she struck out three batters in a row. No runs, no hits,

no one left on base. Mother Mary got three runs in the fifth, three in the sixth and three in the seventh inning. They cooled out and played like champs.

Molly? WELL, she struck out the side in next three innings. ‘Geeks,’ she said to her parents on the way home. ‘They could have won without me.’

<http://www.agreeley.com/homilies00/may07.htm>

But could the disciples “win” without seeing the Risen Lord?

Probably not. Christ’s presence gave

them new hope, new courage, and a renewed desire to preach what Jesus has been teaching them, especially that all need to repent and be forgiven of their sins. We cannot come into God's eternal presence with our sins forgiven; only Christ's sacrifice can absolve us of sin eternally. And each Sunday we refresh Christ's commitment to absolve us of our sins. By our faith are we saved. But our good works are needed to prove that our hearts are turned to the Lord.

The words in the Gospel according to Luke were written not only for the Apostles but for all Christians even up to our own time, especially for those who are nervous or who worry or who think that the Holy Spirit is about to abandon the church. It is a message of hope for those who think the situation is hopeless – which, as English writer and poet G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) observed is the only time that hope is a virtue. Jesus is risen indeed as our Easter greeting says. And he is still with us. And he will always take care of

us and protect us no matter how many idiot things we may do.

<http://www.agreeley.com/hom06/april30.html>

However, repentance is essential to our message of the gospel. Before His ascension, Jesus appeared to his disciples and told them what he wanted them to preach. Luke 24:45-47, “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to

suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, [Verse 47] and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ When we explore the link between repentance and forgiveness we find that they are two sides of the same coin. The message is repentance and forgiveness; not just forgiveness with no repentance. Repentance is the response to God’s grace that opens the heart to receive forgiveness. If the heart is hard and unresponsive to God’s grace, then there can be no forgiveness of sin. So,

we preach forgiveness through the cross of Jesus Christ; but that forgiveness comes in conjunction with a turning to God and a turning away from sin.

Think about the Lord's Prayer. In it we ask God to "Forgive us our debts (sins, trespasses)...." But there are two other requests in the Lord's Prayer that tie repentance with that request for forgiveness. One is "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." That is saying to God, "I don't want sin; I don't even want to be tempted with it."

The other petition is “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done....” The prayer Jesus taught includes not only a request for forgiveness, but a commitment to the will of God, as well. And we have revelation of God’s will in the Bible.

We can see from Scripture the error of assuming forgiveness of sin when there is no repentance from that sin.

So, repentance is essential to forgiveness.

Repentance means a change of mind, “metanoia”, that results in a change of

behavior. Across the world people are being offered forgiveness without repentance. They are not told that God's forgiveness is linked with their repentance. But to turn to God, one must turn from sin. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it 'cheap grace'. In his book, "The Cost of Discipleship", he wrote "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace

without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.” There can be no forgiveness without repentance:

Proverbs 28:13 says, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses” (that’s part of it; but listen to the rest of the sentence) “and forsakes [one’s sins] will have mercy.”

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/is-repentance-a-dirty-word-part-1-richard-tow-sermon-on-repentance-209341?ref=SermonSerps>

So let us become examples for others in this sin-filled and broken world. Let us shine the light and hope of Christ where we work or study and when we are with each other. For through our faith comes the forgiveness of sins, but to ask God for forgiveness without repenting and turning from our sins make a mockery of the cross.

Christ is risen. Alleluia. Alleluia.  
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.  
Alleluia.

Amen.

## Description:

Repentance is necessary for forgiveness. Christ died to give us forgiveness of our sins, but without our turning from our sins, we make Christ's death muted and ineffective. The Risen Lord reminded us that we are to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all the world.

Tags:

Repentance, forgiveness, Jesus, risen,

Lord, Christ, God, temptation, sins,

trespasses, debts, Bonhoeffer, grace,

crucifixion, cross, dead, death,

discipleship, works, faith, disciples,

preach, Lord's, prayer. CPR,

defibrillator, hospital, business, school

**St. Stephen's Episcopal ProCathedral**

**35 South Franklin Street**

**Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania 18702**

**The Third Sunday of Easter**

**Year (B)**

**April 19, 2015**

**DRAFT**

**A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish**

**“Living Proof”**

**The Gospel: Luke 24:36b-48**

While the disciples were telling how they had seen Jesus risen from the dead, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were

disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "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, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Risen Lord, comfort and strengthen our hearts that we may be your witnesses to those around us. Amen.

Peter Wagner, a former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, reports the findings of a missionary who had gone to the South American country of Venezuela and who came across a

jungle village in which all the inhabitants were Christians, all of them were Christians. But no missionary had ever penetrated into that region of the Venezuelan jungle so he was curious as to how the villagers had all become Christians in such a remote area. The story which he learned was that one of the villagers had taken some goods into a city to try to sell them, and that that villager had been given a Bible while he was in the city. He took the Bible back to his village, and, after reading it and sharing it with his relatives and friends,

all of them became Christians. No one had taught them how to be Christians, they only learned themselves by reading the Holy Scriptures. The missionary was amazed that there were only three heresies which had resulted from their literal interpretations of the Bible. One heresy was that no one ate any pork---an Old Testament warning which was replaced by a vision to the apostle Peter in the book of Acts; the tribe had not thoroughly read the book of the Acts. The second heresy was that they had gotten rid of all the village's dogs, due

to a comment in Paul's letter to the Philippians about "dogs," which actually referred to the people of Paul's time who had tried to require circumcision before baptism. And the third heresy was that the village's worship day was exclusively on Saturday--they had not correctly interpreted the Resurrection Day as being on Sunday, the first day of the week, but were observing the Sabbath Day from the Old Testament book of Exodus. But the amazing thing was that in spite of the few weaknesses of their

beliefs, all these isolated jungle villagers had been able to see the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and had come to know that Jesus' suffering and death and resurrection would protect all who put their trust in his self-sacrifice. The jungle villagers were able to see the profound truth of the Easter event just from their study of the Holy Bible.

How many of us treat our Bibles as the true revealed word of God? How many of us use our Bibles to direct our day to day lives? How many of us open our Bibles each day and each week to

see what God is trying to tell us about the current issues and needs of our lives?

As our Gospel lesson says, Jesus used the Holy Scriptures to open the minds of his disciples on that first Easter night. They were despondent about the loss of their Teacher, Master, and friend. Jesus' tomb was empty. Two disciples had encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus when Jesus broke bread with them. Jesus had even already appeared to Peter and to Mary Magdalene. Yet the disciples still had doubts in their

hearts. These disciples become examples of our own doubts and uncertainties even though we hear over and again the Easter proclamation that “Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.” But we tend to live our lives largely as though this most earth-shattering event had never really occurred. We keep our faith privately to ourselves. We tend to have fear and even terror of letting anyone without faith know that we have faith. We don’t want to look or sound different in a world which doubts even the existence

of God or which only sees God as a distant power whose sole purpose is to cause lightning, floods, or earthquakes from time to time. Faith, true faith, if hidden can make little impact on our day to day actions. We would return to our old habits just as did the first disciples if it weren't for our weekly or occasional attendance at church. We are a bit like the hot coal of a fire which had smoldered and nearly gone out because of being separated from the glowing fire of faith.

In other words, we too tend to cower behind closed and locked doors for fear of those who have no faith.

But it is precisely for us who lurk behind our closed and locked doors that the risen Lord bursts in on our carefully protected lives. We are not allowed to secret ourselves and our faith. Jesus calls us to study the Holy Scriptures, to see again what we may have learned decades or years ago in Sunday School, to dust off that coffee table Bible and even to open it up for a few quiet

minutes from time to time, maybe even daily.

We at St. Stephen's continue to make several copies of the "Day by Day" devotional guide available on the back book table to emphasize the importance of using at least one devotional book to guide our daily devotional time--there are also other devotional booklets many use, one is called "Our Daily Bread." Our lives are daily enhanced by reading those devotional thoughts--there is a brief lesson for each day of the year. And to

follow the daily scripture readings in our own Bible is one of the most healing and strengthening things one could possibly do each day, and we also need to combine that with reading daily prayers from our Prayer Book. We need spiritual refreshment, spiritual recharging, spiritual rediscovery each and every day. We cannot depend on a Sunday “fix” of faith to carry us through to the next Sunday that we attend church. We need to keep our spiritual batteries fully charged, and that requires careful daily maintenance. Just as we

need physical food daily, so do we also need spiritual food daily.

There is another exercise called ‘doing a spiritual inventory’ to see what are our spiritual gifts. If any are interested we could do a “Holy Spirit” session between services one Sunday to find out what are our spiritual gifts. It will be a very insightful time if you have never been able to find out what your spiritual gifts may be. And you could bring your friends as well! It is a great way to enhance the meaning of church membership.

Belief and faith are not always that easy to come by. We need an intentional program of self-examination to become faith-filled Christians.

Researchers tell us often we carry a fifth grade understanding of our faith through the rest of our lives, and as a result we feel completely inadequate to express our faith to any other living being—and our Christian witness suffers as a result. So we need to be recharged and even retrained for our duties as an adult witness for our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ. Without grounding, we can tend to go off into various heresies.

One of the heresies which besieged the early Christians was called the heresy of “gnosticism”. Heresy simply means “wrong belief” of “distorted belief.” Heresies can arise when an individual or group begins to add things into Holy Scripture or to put outlandish interpretations on Holy Scripture.

Gnostics are still with us today, just as they were in the first century. Sects which have been known even to commit

mass suicide are generally some sort of gnostic Christianity.

Gnostics are particularly noted for their emphasis on some special “knowledge” which no one else has. For example someone in a California gnostic sect believed so much in extraterrestrial beings that they imagined these space beings were hiding behind the a comet in a huge space ship. This was of course a complete dream, which in this extreme case led to the deaths of dozens of followers of this gnostic sect.

In addition to some special “knowledge”, gnosticism, spelled G-N-O-S-T-I-C-I-S-M, or the word “gnostic” plus the suffix I-S-M, gnosticism generally feels it has obtained perfection due to its special knowledge and that its dedicated followers are completely sin-free. Gnostics frequently feel they have no need for confession or repentance of their sins because they feel they have not committed any sin since they became gnostic. Gnostics also usually question the actual physical body of Jesus Christ and/or the spiritual

presence of the Risen Christ, since they tend to over-emphasize either the spiritual nature of all things, especially the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ, or to under-emphasize the Easter message of resurrection. Some gnostics deny the suffering of Jesus on the cross of crucifixion; a typical gnostic comment is that a sinless person cannot suffer. But true Christians know otherwise. Just being a Christian in an unbelieving world can cause us a certain degree of pain. But gnostics often feel they are above the pain of the world and that

they are certainly superior to the weaknesses of lowly Christians who have not been enlightened by the special knowledge of their particular brand of gnosticism. The early church found that they were nearly outnumbered by the gnostic groups and gnostic churches, and today's world is not much different.

Our gospel today reports Jesus as saying, quote, “a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have,” end quote. Many of the gnostics at the time Luke's gospel was written thought of Jesus as just a ghost or a spirit who

only 'appeared' to suffer on the cross of crucifixion. These gnostics would see Jesus as a phantom who really had no real substance, no true physical body, no real physical feelings. And the gnostic ideal would be to approach life with a withdrawal from anything physical. The physical was seen as being only sinful and base; and some gnostic sects even forbid marriages, seeing in marriage only the weakness of the physical flesh. As a result gnostics often would last only one generation and would die out. New gnostic

movements would have to arise to take their place, but arise they did, and they still do. Gnostics are still very much with us. Some gnostics rely heavily on their astrological signs or tarot card readings as being their form of special revelation from the spiritual God who never really came in fleshly form. Any special revelation which has no grounding in Holy Scripture leads to gnosticism--there are a lot of self-proclaimed gnostic “guru’s,” “spiritual leaders,” and the like who are always lurking around to claim a new follower

for their particular brand of gnosticism. They will frequently mix in various bits and pieces of Christianity, seeing the power of Christ without really having faith in him and his full message.

Bible study with the assistance of two or more interpretative sources is essential to keep from falling into gnosticism. There is only one Way, only one Truth, only one Life Eternal, and that can be found through the one and only Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Search diligently for him in Holy Scripture. Search diligently for him in

prayer and worship. And search diligently and regularly for him in the fellowship of the Christian church.

Jesus suffered for our sins, died, and arose for us so that we might have eternal life with him. He was real, not a ghost, not a spirit. Only in him can we find eternal life.

Amen.