

## THE LIVING STORY

Text: Acts 4:8-12

Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:36-49

April 25, 1982

Let us pray. O risen Lord, we know you are really present with us in this worship. Touch us and raise us from the dead, that having come alive in your love we might continue your ministry the way your Apostles once did.

Amen.

There are seven Sundays in Lent in which we commemorate the end of Jesus' ministry. But these are followed by the seven Sundays of Easter, in which we proclaim that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now in our lessons we hear how the risen Lord touched the disciples and changed them into Apostles. In this way the Apostles were raised up to continue the ministry which Jesus Christ had begun. And in Acts their story is told, as we heard in the reading of our first lesson. Having been touched by the risen Lord, the Apostles became clothed with the power from on high and we hear about their curing a cripple. In Chapter 3, Peter and John cure a lame beggar, and these are miracles just like those performed by Jesus in his ministry. Clearly, Jesus' ministry is being continued, and the holy story of God's love goes on.

Because Jesus was raised from the dead, he lives, and the living Christ is here present with us and touches us, and like the

Apostles, we get clothed by the power from on high, and we, too, are empowered to continue the ministry begun by him. And it can be described as a story. The way the story of Jesus was continued by the Apostles in Acts, so we, touched by the risen Lord, are lifted up to continue this holy love story. Someday, then, someone will write a history of our deeds and of us and it will be called the Acts of the People of St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Coney Island; it will be all about you and about me because we too will be clothed by the power from on high to continue doing miracles like those that clustered all around Jesus' ministry.

And that's the way we get into the story. How does the risen Lord open the Scriptures to the Apostles? It is as if the Holy Scriptures could be held open, and they could go into it and become part of the story of God's love for the world. And out of this holy story we come, changed into the people called to live the story, whose plot is God's planned salvation of humankind for our day. The Scriptures are opened to us because we start to live this story ourselves. We walk out of the pages of the Bible and the story comes alive in us. This living story is more than a play with real live actors on a stage. This holy story is happening, is unfolding in our very lives. We are in this living story in which God acts through us, in which we have been opened for God's actions of love and mercy.

God calls us to live this story for which he has written the inspired script. With that we become the holy living story of God's miracles, which began in Jesus' ministry, continued in that of the Apostles, and raises us up into its holy spell today.

We can understand what miracles are if we step back into the Emmaus story a moment. After the risen Lord vanished from their sight, they said to each other: "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Touched by the risen Lord, we feel loved by God, and our hearts become warm and burn within us. Oftentimes after a worship service we feel the change that has taken place within our hearts. From inner pressure and anxiety, the present Lord touches us with peace and calm—a balm is administered to a sin-sick soul, and we are assured that there is a place for us; there is a way that our feet can go. This change is God's action in us and the risen Christ touching us. And this is a miracle.

Touched by the risen Lord, the holy story comes alive in us. How does this happen? How does this begin again with us? Listen to the words from a song:

Hear him, ye deaf, his praise, ye dumb  
Your loosened tongue employ.  
Ye blind, behold your savior come;  
And leap, ye lame, for joy.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Charles Rice, J. Louis Martyr. Proclamation Easter. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, page 25.

In the presence of the risen Lord, we ourselves are ignited in the power of the resurrection. God's actions come alive in us. (More, God touches the dead Christ in you. The dead Christ leaps to life, and fills you with the life of God.) No more have we eyes that see not, nor ears that hear not. No longer are we lame and paralyzed, but we are empowered, our hands to God's deeds, our feet to God's actions, our whole being to the spontaneity of God's miracles.

But this has to begin with even you, even with me. O, how dead and buried we can be! Who will roll the heavy stone away?

A friend of mine is very lonely and is very trying to my patience. He told me "Pastor, the whole trouble with you is that you never tell me anything." I was dumbounded. So, I watched him closer in our conversation. When I would respond to what he said, suddenly I noticed something, as if shutters were coming down inside him and I knew he did not hear a word I'd said to him. He must have been thinking about what to say next or had long ago learned the bad habit of shutting people out and only hearing himself. This person needs to be touched by this living Christ so that the shutters which make him deaf can be removed and he can hear the word of life again from the wonderful love story.

Sometimes we have a few problems which we just can't see the solutions for. Or it's one problem; one problem is enough, that we just don't know how to solve. Maybe it's a tenant/landlord problem,

or a problem in court. But it seems to place a dark screen into our sight. No matter the lovely spring day, this dark screen seems to filter all the joy out of it. Then we are touched by the risen Lord. The dark screen is removed from our vision and God's holy light comes flooding in. And the miracle has again begun in us, and it can unfold and envelop those who associate with us.

One fellow, yesterday, told me of a neighbor who stung him with a very unkind remark. A friend of his beside him said: "You should have told him 'That's none of your business!'" But the fellow, doubled up in anger, could not respond. His voice had died in him. It lay there dead and buried. I know a woman who said not a word in seven years. Old Minnie. Her voice had died within her. But the risen Lord touches us, and our voice is raised back up from the dead. No matter what the remark, we can speak up. We can suddenly respond. In the instant of God's miracle, not only with our voice, but with our whole being. No longer are we lame and paralyzed, but we can act in the contours of God's miracles, God's actions happening in us. And the living story sets forth again into more pages, more chapters of living Scripture.

God touched the dead Christ and raised him. God touches the dead Christ in you. The dead Christ leaps to life and fills you with the life of God. We start vibrating in harmony with the living Christ, as we are taken up into the life of God under the wonderful spell of the holy living love story.

Amen.

Peter Krey