

## “Have You Anything to Eat? Sustainable Food in a Changing Climate”

### Luke 24: 36b-48

I shared earlier in the week that this is not our usual or typical Earth Sunday Scripture. Usually for Earth Sunday, I pick a psalm that celebrates God’s creation. You know, maybe Psalm 104 or Psalm 8, just to name a few. Or in the past for our Earth Sunday celebrations, I have also read Genesis 1, letting the beautiful words from the first creation story usher in our Earth Day celebration. But not this year. This year, I went with Luke 24: 36b-48, a Scripture that doesn’t reference God’s creation at all.

So why not pick one of the many Scriptures that fill our Bible that refer to the beauty and wonder of God’s creation for our Earth Day celebration? I could give you the really easy answer and tell you that it was because Luke 24: 36b-48 is what was chosen for lectionary. I could tell you the Green Chalice group within our denomination left me no choice.

Or I could just give you the honest answer. Luke 24: 36b-48 makes the perfect Scripture for our Earth Day celebration because it challenges us to go beyond, to see beyond acts of beauty and wonder. It challenges us to really fulfil our calling to care for God’s creation. I’m sure we are all wondering How does it do this, especially since it doesn’t mention creation at all? Well, it does in a round

about way. In verse 41, Jesus asks his disciples “Have you anything to eat?” A seemingly normal question except Jesus died, remember. Jesus was resurrected remember. He doesn’t really need to eat because well, he is the resurrected Christ. But there he is, asking for something to eat.

Now before we sidetracked into conversations about whether Jesus was physically resurrected or was he a spirit which would then lead to conversations about whether Jesus was fully human or fully divine, let me just stop us right there and say we’ll save that for another sermon on another day. Right now, I want us to come back to Jesus’ question and see the connection it holds for us to Earth Day.

The significance behind Jesus’ question of “Have you anything to eat” reminds us even for Jesus, there was no separation between his physical realm and his spiritual calling as the Son of God. And the same should also be said for those of us who claim him as our Risen Savior.

Let me explain: Have you ever really thought about where our food comes from? How it shows up in our stores, ends up in our pantries and refrigerators? Not many of us do. We just know if we are out of something, we can run to the store and pick it up.

We don’t think about how our food is grown. We don’t think about how far our food has to travel just to make it onto the shelves at our local grocery store. We

don't even think about the people who grew our food, the people who picked our food or processed our food. We just know that when we are out of something, we can run to the store and pick it up, and possibly pick up a few other things there we may or may not need as well.

When it comes to the story behind the food that makes it onto our plates, we don't know it. We don't know the story behind the food that we take into our bodies that nourishes us, that sustains us, that satisfies our hungers. We don't know the story behind the food that we expected to give us the strength and energy to become the people that God created us and calls us to be.

I am ashamed to say that my pantry is full of food, food that I really know nothing about except that it now sits on my shelves at home. And I am also ashamed to say that more than likely most of this food will be thrown out because it will not get used or it will expire before I get around to using it.

And I know that I am not alone in this. "The U.S. generates more than 36 million tons of food waste each year, with just under 5 percent of that waste being recovered and recycled." 36 million tons of food waste and that is just the United States. Imagine how much food is wasted around the world while there are people who are going hungry, people who have nothing to eat. 36 million tons of food waste in the US alone.

Jesus asks his disciples, asks us today, “Have you anything to eat?” And rather, ashamedly we say Yes, Jesus we do. But we are just going to throw it out anyway. It is expired or went bad before we got around to using it. We waste more food. We throw away more food while so many of our brothers and sisters in our community, in our state, in our nation, in our world have nothing to eat

You see that’s why this Scripture is perfect for Earth Day. It reminds us that there is a connection between what we put into our physical bodies and how we live out our spiritual calling as followers of Jesus Christ. This Scripture forces us to realize that the very act of eating is sacred and should be treated as such. Not only should we be concerned about what we are putting into our bodies, we should also be concerned with how our food is produced. We should be concerned with how much food is throw away. We should be concerned and deeply troubled with how much food is wasted while so many of God’s children have nothing to eat.

I was reminded of this connection between our physical bodies and our spiritual calling again by a church member in response to the Theology Tuesday that I emailed out earlier this week. While I struggled to find God’s word in this passage, she quickly reminded me of this connection. She said, “This Scripture from Luke and Earth Day go perfectly together. The scripture speaks to the inseparable relationship between the physical world and the spiritual realm. The Earth, as a physical manifestation of God, has an energy and history all its own.

This scripture and the honoring of Earth Sunday all reinforce the fundamental truth that there is not a separation between the physical and the spiritual worlds.”

Or let me say it another way. We as people of faith need to understand that we are not just passing through this world on our way to another one. We are here and now. We are part of God’s creation. We are in God’s creation as followers of Jesus Christ which means that we cannot follow Christ and say that “discipleship means being only concerned with [saving] souls.” Being followers of Jesus Christ also means being concerned for and with the health and well-being of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Being a follower of Jesus Christ means realizing that my action or inaction affects others. Being a follower of Jesus Christ means realizing that my food waste, our food waste is contributing to the continued brokenness that fills our world, which in turns continues to wound the Body of Christ even more.

That’s why we are using this Scripture today for Earth Sunday. Luke wants us to understand that Jesus could have easily left this world after three days in the tomb. His work was finished. His work was complete. He could have left, ready to move onto to the next world. But no, Jesus comes back to be among his disciples once more.

Luke wants us to understand through the telling of this resurrection experience and all the others like it, that Jesus didn’t coming back as a resuscitated

corpse, purely physical, nor did Jesus come back in the words of his disciples “as a ghost”, a being that is purely spiritual. Jesus comes back to be among his disciples as both, both physical and spiritual. Jesus tells the disciples to touch my feet, touch my hands. He asks to eat with them. All of these things that Jesus does are purely physical acts that continue to strengthen Jesus’ connection with his disciples.

It is through these physical acts, Jesus also reminds them that he is the Risen Christ, a spiritual being who reflects the divine nature of God. It is both/and. Jesus comes back and is both physical and spiritual. By doing so, he becomes his disciples and becomes our connection as his followers to both the physical world and our spiritual calling as his followers. Through Jesus’ question of “Have you anything to eat” , Jesus reminds us that we need healthy physical bodies to fulfil our spiritual calling of sharing the Good News that death does not have the last word.

For Luke and for those of us who claim this Risen Savior as our own, this resurrection encounter shows us that our spiritual calling, our mission, our very reason for discipleship, as ones who follow a Risen Christ, our spiritual calling cannot be disconnected from our physical well-being. Nor can it be disconnected from the physical well-being of all of God’s creation either. It is and will always be a both/and for us as people of faith. For example: We cannot only be concerned

about growing spiritually while we ignore the cries of the planet while it dies. Nor can we only worry about the destruction and devastation of God's creation without thinking it doesn't affect us spiritually. "The natural world is the life-giving nourishment of our physical, emotional, aesthetic, moral and religious existence. The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human. To damage this community is to diminish our own existence." (Delgado, p. 16)

We must always remember, that, as the church member said, the Earth is the physical manifestation of God. We are connected both spiritually and physical to it. We are connected both spiritually and physically to all of God's creation.

Once the church member reminded me of this connection, I realized why this year's Earth Sunday celebration was different. You see, in years past, when we have celebrated Earth Sunday, we have played it safe. We have only talked about the beauty and wonder of God's creation. We have basked in the enjoyment God's creation brings to us as people of faith. We have only talked about and celebrated our spiritual connection to the Earth. But not once in all the years past, when we held our Earth Sunday celebrations, did we ever really talk about our physical connection or our physical responsibility to all of God's creation. Because, let's be honest, who really wants to talk about that? That's the depressing stuff. We hear all the time about the rate of pollution happening in our world. We hear all the time

about the increasing number of species going extinct. We hear all the time about how the climate is changing through increased temperatures and extreme weather conditions. We hear about all that stuff all the time. Who really wants to come to church and hear it there too?

When we celebrate Earth Sunday, it has been just easier for us to focus on the beauty of creation. It has been just easier for us to think how God created this world for our enjoyment. It has been just easier for us to celebrate the wonders found in creation that remind us that God is our God, except...that beauty is slowly fading away largely in part to pollution, except all those wonders are slowly being extinguished and destroyed, except that the cries of creation are becoming too loud for us to ignore any longer. As people of faith, we can no longer deny that even while we have celebrated the beauty and wonder of God's creation, we have also played a part in the using and abusing of it.

As people of faith, "if [we say that] a beautiful earth gives us an exalted idea of the divine, [then] an industrially despoiled planet will give us a corresponding idea of God [as well]. When the earth is diminished, its ability to mediate God to us is diminished, and thus our experience of God is diminished as well...Destroying the beauty of God's creation is a spiritual and moral issue. To despoil the earth, pollute the air, and contaminate the waters is desecration and sacrilege. To knowingly and willfully do so is sin." (Delgado, page. 16-17)



For us as followers of Jesus Christ, the Earth is the physical manifestation of God. It is not something for us to just enjoy. It is not something just for us to use and abuse. It is our connection to God. We are connected both spiritually and physical to it. We are connected both spiritually and physically to all the people in it. We are connected both spiritually and physically to all of God's creation. And we can no longer neglect our physical, our economic, or our political responsibility towards caring for all of God's creation.

Because as disciples of Christ who are called to live out our spiritual calling by being connected to the physical world of all of God's creation, we are the ones who can and need to make a change. We are the ones who can make a difference. We are the ones who can bring healing and wholeness to all of God's creation. If nothing else, then we are at least the ones who have something to eat. We are called to share the food we have with all our brothers and sisters, not waste it.

When we stop and think about what we put into our physical bodies, when we stop and think about how much we waste while so many of our brothers and sisters go hunger, a change begins to happen. We begin to think about our actions and our inactions differently. We begin to not be okay with a throw way polluted devastated image of God. When we stop and think about Jesus question, "Have you anything to eat" and we realize the connection between our physical bodies

and our spiritual calling as followers of Jesus Christ, a change begins to happen and hope begins to blossom.

After all, isn't that what the resurrection encounter is all about? The resurrection of Jesus Christ, both physically and spiritually, reminds us that God is still working in our world, that God is bringing about new life for all of God's creation, that God is revealing God's Kingdom among us each and every day.

So in spite of all the stories of pollution and food waste, I look around and I see hope. Not because I am naïve and not because I have lost touch with reality. I look around and I see the faces of people who can make a difference. I see people who understand that we are only borrowing this world from our children's children. I see people who understand that we have committed to living out our faith daily in ways that will bring about the Kingdom of God. I see people who want to know the story behind the food that nourishes us, that strengthens us, that gives us the energy to become the people God created us and calls us to be. That's why it is important to understand and know who grows our food, who produces our food, who processes our food. Because it reminds us time and time again of our connection to God's Table where goodness and life abound.

You see, "Biblical stories such as this one address nourishment of bodies but also of spirits, and relationships between people... The ways we choose to

consume food, support food systems and operate within the global food economy are matters of faith. Honoring right relationships (between God and people, between God and all creation, between groups of people, and between people and all creation) are vital for living a daily discipleship in line with biblical understandings of community.

As people of faith, we need to realize that Earth Sunday is not just about celebrating the beauty and wonder of God's creation and how this feeds us spiritually. It is also about keeping our planet healthy and clean. It is also about us as followers of Jesus Christ making promises to help the environment and make positive changes in their community. It is about us recognizing that we are called to create justice and bring healing and wholeness to all of God's creation. Earth Sunday is about recognizing that we are here, as physical and spiritual beings connected to God's earth and that we can make a difference.

May we never forget this connection and the power it holds to bring forth new life for all of God's creation. Amen.