

"I AM Among Them; I AM Among YOU!"

(Luke 24:36-39)

Introduction: There is an absolutely fascinating parallel between the Old and New Testaments that our Gospel this morning from Luke 24 helps us to see:

- A. In Exodus the Israelites were terrified when the Lord appeared to them on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16).**
- B. Here in Luke 24:37 the disciples were terrified when the Lord appeared to them after the resurrection.**

But there is more to the parallel:

- A. In Exodus 3:12-15 and Exodus 6:1-18 God revealed Himself as "I AM," the Lord who would protect and redeem His people through the exodus.**
- B. Here in Luke 24:39 where Jesus is recorded as saying in the ESV, "it is I myself" ...the wording is actually: "I AM myself" or "I AM He". He is the great "I AM" who brought salvation to us through His own exodus from the dead!**

That is the same "I AM/God and Lord" who became flesh, was condemned and nailed to the cross; the same I AM who is physically raised from the dead and remains the eternal I AM! We need to know this, because when this Lord comes, He is the true "I AM" who has all power to help us in any distress!

Part I: Now there are lots of reasons we poor sinners get terrified and upset.

- A. As far as our Gospel text is concerned it appears that the original disciples were terrified because they thought Jesus was a ghost...thus the saying when we see someone afraid, flush, and upset: "you look like you've seen a ghost!"**
- B. The disciples also had this reaction when they had seen Jesus walk on water (Mt 14:26 & Mk 6:49), and Jesus warned them not to panic this way when they heard about the signs and warnings of the end (Lk 21:9).**
- C. That is to say, there are other and many reasons to be terrified and upset just as the disciples were when they saw Jesus.**
- D. Our sin condition sets us up for being constantly terrified and upset. Ever since sin came into the world and we were made subject to death, the wages of death include being frightened, anxious, and terrified by all that now threatens us and reminds us of our weakness and mortality.**

- E. I remember the last time I was in the hospital. I was fortunate the situation was not as serious as I had imagined, but the pain was very real and the infection I had was pretty serious. I was also afraid; I was full of worry. I was being reminded of my mortality. I was being reminded that I could easily die.
- F. And we live in a world where our real mortality is constantly put before us. Many of you know that we moved from The Woodlands, TX. Well this past week the national news reported that someone right outside of The Woodlands walked right up to a young mother with her infant baby and committed a terrible crime and took the baby...this is the kind of world we live in. It is no wonder people can so easily live in anxiety and fear!

II. But Jesus does not comes “among them” (v 36) or among you in order to terrify and upset you, but quite to the contrary, His coming among you is intended to help you in the face of everything else that threatens you.

- A. And Jesus was quite specific in what He did to eliminate their fear and to replace that fear with believing joy (v 41)!
- B. So what did Jesus do?
- C. His comforting ministry; the giving of His peace to His people (you and me) was and is connected to showing His people his hands and his feet (vss 39-40).

III. But doesn’t this present a modern-day dilemma?

- A. Indeed it was seeing His hands and feet and the evidence of those precious and holy wounds that testified to the divine blood that flowed from them that covered the sins and the power of death...thus when the disciples saw *that*, they were full of believing joy!
- B. But this is where we can get a little confused, if not perhaps a little jealous or envious. Those original disciples were given a very special assurance: the most precious sign and proof of Christ’s victory shared with them since He Himself actually and physically came among them!
- C. And right about the time we might consider fretting that we weren’t included in that, we’re reminded that we need to be a little more composed. After all, remember what Jesus once said to Thomas:

John 20:29: “Jesus said to [Thomas]: ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”

- D. These are vital words. We are called to take them heart. God gives us the witness of the Word of God, what the apostles saw, what the apostles heard, and what the apostles touched with their own hands...we are to believe based on their holy and reliable witness! They gave their very lives for that witness! It's trustworthy!
- E. But right about the time I remind myself of that, and rehearse this pious attitude I'm supposed to have, I know at the same time that there is still this little part of me that wishes that I had some signs as well!

IV. Beware of signs; but hold to the ones from God!

- A. Now this is a tricky thing, because many signs – and I would venture to say that most religious or spiritual signs – can be deadly. Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light (2nd Corinthians 11). Can you imagine? What if you prayed a prayer asking for a sign through the appearance of an angel? But Scripture says that that angel could be the devil! Beware of signs.
- B. But having said that, does John 20:29 mean that the Lord has no signs for His people here and now? Let me ask this question another way, “Does Luke 24 that teaches that the great “I AM” came into the midst of His first disciples in order to comfort them give us any indication of the kinds of signs that still persist in God’s Holy Church?”
- C. And the answer my friends is an emphatic yes, and let me focus on two of them that are more important to us than I can possibly express!

Conclusion: Your Two Signs of “I AM” Among You!

- A. Go back to THE signs that covered the fear of the first disciples: Jesus showed them His hands and His feet.
- B. Now ask yourself: “What came from those hands and those feet?” Answer: His precious and holy blood!
- C. Dear Christian, every Sunday at this Church, you taste and see that the Lord is good...every, single Sunday, you take and drink the blood of Christ that flowed from His hands and His feet. You see and taste THE sign of the Great “I AM” who comes among you to keep you in His victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil.
- D. You see the greatest sign that the Great “I AM” is among you!
- E. Ignatius wrote in his epistle to the Ephesians (ANF, volume 1, 57) in reference to Holy Communion: “the medicine of immortality, and the antidote which prevents us from dying, but a cleansing remedy driving away evil, [which causes] that we should live in God through Jesus Christ.”

- F. But there is another great sign that those precious wounds has established...they created God's Church where the Great "I AM" continues to dwell among us: He has made us the family of God and we see Him in and through one another.**
- G. C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory* wrote: "Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbour, he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ ...the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden (19)."**
- H. If ever you are terrified know this: the Great "I AM" comes among you dear Christian: And see Him in and through His precious blood poured out for you every single time you receive the Holy Sacrament; and see Him in and through your fellow Christians, whose arms and hands hold you in the midst of trials...God is here...we see Him even now. He keeps His Word: "I AM among you!"**