Luke 24:36-48

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’\*37They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.38He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?39Look 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.’40And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.**\*****41While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering,** he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’42They gave him a piece of broiled fish,43and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 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.**’45Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,**46and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah\* is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,47and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.48You are witnesses\* of these things.

**We Are Called As Children**

**Last week, the thrust of the message was about being “grasped” by God,** about making God your ultimate concern. **You’re never too young** to start getting grasped by God, because when you make God your focus, your ultimate concern, you will develop an actual relationship with God, like children with their parents. Parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, you should **get your children into the routine of praying** several times a day – before meals and at bedtime. The earlier your children come to **understand that God is real, the sooner they can get upset with him.**

**Understand that getting upset with God is not a bad thing**. We all do it; it’s quite natural, as God’s children, that **we have tantrums** from time to time, like children. Raise your hand if you were once a child. And who were the most important people in your life when you were a child? Mom and Dad. You might have had friends or siblings that you spent more time with, but when your brother pulled the head off of your Barbie doll, who did you go to for justice? When your sister put garlic in your peanut butter and jelly sandwich, who did you go to? When you had a bad dream, who did you go to? When things were going well, you could be with your friends and siblings, but when you *needed* something, where did you go?

You depended on your parents to make your life run smoothly. But when life did not go smoothly and your parents wouldn’t give you what you wanted, what did you do? **Where were your anger and tantrum directed**? Who did you blame? Usually it was Mom and/or Dad. “What do you mean I can’t eat all my Easter candy now???” “What do you mean I can’t stay up to watch that show???” Soon you learn ways of manipulation; “Jimmy’s mom and dad let him watch that show.” Soon thereafter you learn that your parents are different from Jimmy’s parents. I remember **when our family moved** from Ohio to Virginia – I was seven, my sister was nine, my brother eleven. I don’t know how my brother reacted, but I know my sister and I cried, and we likely asked “Why?” All our friends were right there. It didn’t matter that the city we were moving *from* was Cleveland. It didn’t matter how nice a home we would be moving to, how big the yard, how nice the neighborhood. This was home and we liked it! **Now we faced the unknown and we were afraid and angry**, and those who knew it the most were Mom and Dad. But we realized that we were kind of stuck with Mom and Dad, at least for awhile, until we could figure out who *else* could take care of us. After we had moved and made new friends, the fear of the unknown was gone and we were no longer angry with our parents about moving – we found other reasons to be angry with them.

Repeatedly in the Bible, you and I are called God’s *children*; John calls us children. Jesus calls us children. Through the prophets, God calls us children. And we often act like children. Like children, we spend most of our time and energy with our friends, doing our own thing, but when we really need help, we go to God. We depend on God and trust him to take care of us. But when things don’t go the way we want them to, we think of all sorts of reasons why they *should* go the way we would like them to go, and we can come up with good reasons, yet God doesn’t just change things to make them go the way we want them to go. And we don’t like that, and we get angry with God, confused about God. “God, why don’t you love me?” “God, don’t you care about me?” “A loving God wouldn’t allow this to happen.” Think about how many times God hears that.

But he would much prefer hearing *that* to hearing nothing at all. He’d much prefer to have you angry and close to him, like a pouting child in the back seat as you drive to your new home, than for you to be far away from him and running further away. As a parent, you’d much rather have a child who is angry with you, who is disappointed with you, who *accuses* you, than one who runs away from you. And you hope that eventually your child will come to accept the decisions you’ve made. Eventually your child will understand why he should eat all the Easter candy at one time, or why he should avoid certain people or places. And as a parent you know that some things will take time to teach, and the anger may linger for a long time, but you love your children and endure all the anger and insults and tantrums trusting that someday your children will understand why you did what you did trust your decision despite their doubts.

Our religious heritage, the Judeo-Christian heritage, is an amazing narrative of this child/parent relationship that we have with God. The stories of Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Jacob, tell us of people who were not extraordinary, who were often angry with God, who were rebellious and stiff-necked. What distinguished them from other people was that they recognized God’s steadfast love. God didn’t make life easy for them or meet all their expectations, but he never ran away from his people and the people did not run away from God. There were empires around Israel that had far more people worshiping their own Gods – the Egyptians and Babylonians and Syrians and Macedonians and the Romans had their own religions and their own gods, but is there anyone today who places trust in any of those gods? Why is it that only the God of Abraham, the Mesopotamian nomad, is still honored and worshiped today? It’s because that God, the one true God, has led his people in a way that we understand and we can trust. We may not like what he does; it may confuse and upset us, but he says, “I am the Lord, your God who delivered you from slavery and into a land of milk and honey.” **I want what is best for you and I deliver on my promises.**

Jesus selected as *his* disciples from among those who trusted and worshiped the God of Abraham, men and women who had a heritage of trusting God and knowing that God delivers on his promises. People who did not abandon God, even if they abandoned him. The men who were gathered in the upper room on Easter evening were confused, scared, upset with themselves for their lack of courage at the time of Jesus’ arrest, but probably more upset with Jesus for not being who they wanted him to be. The crucifixion was not supposed to happen – it didn’t fit in with their plans, and it made no sense to them that God had any good reason for it. It seemed to them that Jesus had either fooled them into believing something about himself that wasn’t true, that he was the Messiah and the kingdom of God was at hand, or Jesus was self-deceived, believing himself to be something he was not. Either he was despicable or pathetic. But something kept them together, some glimmer of hope that maybe he wasn’t a liar or a lunatic. They had learned to trust him as children trust their parents, and when things didn’t go the way they had planned, they didn’t know where to go. Their hearts being grasped by God, Jesus seemed to fit the bill while no one else really did. So now that Jesus was dead, where could they go?

The most encouraging news that I share with you today is that God accepts us as little children. Jesus appears to the disciples, and there is confusion. And there is doubt. Today’s passage says that the disciples were at once joyful, disbelieving, and wondering. Was Jesus truly resurrected? Am I hallucinating? Is this a ghost? And even though Jesus addresses their doubts by eating solid food in their presence and explaining all of scripture to them, I would guess that many still doubted. Yet Jesus still trusts them and gives them a chore – tell all nations about me. You and I have been handed that task despite our doubts. We may be struggling with the resurrection. We may be trying to figure out why Jesus had to suffer and die. We may have doubts about whether or not God’s kingdom will come to this earth. But we’re gatherer here because . there is nowhere else to turn. Despite our doubts we have faith, and we act in faith. As children we may struggle with the way things are, but we need to recognize our need for a God who has delivered on his promises and promised us eternity in Christ .