

**“Muscle and Bone Like This”**  
**Sermon from Luke 24:36-49**  
**Given Sunday, May 8, 2022**  
**for the First Baptist Church of McMinnville**  
**Reverend Erika Marksbury, Senior Pastor**

*While they were saying all this, Jesus appeared to them and said, “Peace be with you.” They thought they were seeing a ghost and were scared half to death. He continued with them, “Don’t be upset, and don’t let all these doubting questions take over. Look at my hands; look at my feet—it’s really me. Touch me. Look me over from head to toe. A ghost doesn’t have muscle and bone like this.” As he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. They still couldn’t believe what they were seeing. It was too much; it seemed too good to be true.*

*He asked, “Do you have any food here?” They gave him a piece of leftover fish they had cooked. He took it and ate it right before their eyes.*

*Then he said, “Everything I told you while I was with you comes to this: All the things written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms have to be fulfilled.”*

*He went on to open their understanding of the Word of God, showing them how to read scripture this way. He said, “You can see now how it is written that the Messiah suffers, rises from the dead on the third day, and then a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in his name to all nations—starting from here, from Jerusalem! You’re the first to hear and see it. You’re the witnesses. What comes next is very important: I am sending what my Father promised to you, so*

*stay here in the city until he arrives, until you're equipped with power from on high."*

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I've been thinking lately about what we inherit.

I have two books. I keep them tucked away in a desk drawer. I only pull them out occasionally, when I want to remember. They are both old, and a few pages in each are hanging by a thread, and if I'm not careful with them, they might fall apart. But I want to keep them, and I want my kids to have them, because they tell a little bit about who we come from.

One book is from my maternal grandfather. His name was Lemoyne, but everyone called him Jeff. Every time I've seen his name, it's recorded as Jeff, except in this book. It's his aviator's flight log book. So it doesn't really tell a story - except it does. Those columns and rows, dates and hours, record every time he went up into the sky.

It's a book he kept from his very first flight, so he's got himself recorded as the student, and five or six different names of those who taught him how to operate a plane. And after a certain number of hours, with no other fanfare, at least not any recorded in this book, after a certain number of hours, there's a switch. And my grandpa's name becomes the one listed in the teacher's column, and new names begin to populate the student column.

I didn't know this grandpa very well. He died when I was only three. But in this little book I have this project of his, these ivory pages made blue with his own handwriting, and cover worn thin from his return, again and again, to keep this record.

The other book is from my paternal grandfather. His name was Walter, but everyone called him Jack. This one's a notebook, so it's shorter, but its pages are larger. It's kind of pieced together - articles cut out and glued in, some pages he typed and then attached to these lined pages, some pictured torn from magazines and put in the same way.

My favorite pages in this book are the ones done on staff paper, the pages on which he's written songs, short pieces of Appalachian music. My paternal grandfather was a music teacher his whole life, and this notebook is a lesson plan he made for seventh and eighth grades about the music of the mountains in Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee. There are some songs I recognize and some I've never heard of, and he's written notes by each about how the students liked the song, or didn't, and how he might present it differently next time. Like the log book, it's not a story - except in the ways that it is.

Neither book was meant for me. Neither book was set aside for me especially - I claimed them when I found them, one in a box of old stuff we were sorting after my grandmother passed away, the other, years later, tucked into the drawer of an old

dresser. No one fought me for them. Today those books live together in a drawer I rarely open.

They aren't stories, exactly, but they tell me something about who I come from. They tell me about a time and a place I do not know, about people I only knew a bit. They are condensed versions of moments, of passions, records of labor and failure and success, of fear and courage and joy.

They are what I inherit.

What do you have, from those who came before you?

*Valarie Kaur: If we do this right, they will inherit not our fear but our bravery.*

I've been thinking about how the disciples maybe were trying to pass on their bravery to us.

How they were remembering their fear, remembering after the crucifixion, the fear that kept them isolated, that kept them locked away from the rest of the world, that kept them worried they'd meet the same fate - it wouldn't have been unreasonable for them to worry in that way. I've been thinking about how maybe they remembered that fear, they acknowledged it, they knew it was the truth of those days, but they knew it wasn't the only truth, and they wanted to pass on something different. To their kids and grandkids, to the young ones in their community.

And what they passed on was the story of a bodily resurrection.

We've said the resurrection stories don't all agree with each other.

In some of the stories, it's pretty easy to make that case that what rises on Easter is a new understanding, a new awareness, a new compassion. Suddenly the disciples recognize anyone and everyone as a bearer of the image of God - the gardener near the tomb, the stranger on the road. These stories have become, for many of us, the core of the Easter good news - the idea that Jesus was killed but what he shared, what he taught, that could not be killed, could not be shut up in a tomb, that it never lived only in him but then and forever on his message beat in the hearts of his students and his friends and in our own today. Some of these resurrection stories tell us that.

And then there are stories like today's. Where there is no question we are being asked to believe in a physical reanimation of Jesus' body. Stories where we're being sold this wild idea that the one who was killed was later given back his life, and went walking around, searching for his friends, trying to convince them he was real.

Look at my hands.

Look at my feet.

Touch me.

Feed me.

This is also a story we inherit. It is also a telling of moments and passions, of fear and courage and joy.

What do we do with it? How can we consider what this meant to those who passed it on? What motivated them to tell the story in this way? Why the insistence: “A ghost doesn’t have muscle and bone like this. Give me some fish”?

I don’t know about you, but some days my muscle and bone feel like all I’ve got. I know that’s not the whole of it - I know there’s a soul somewhere in there - but there are days when bodies take the whole of my time, my effort, my concentration. Feed and dress and transport the bodies of my children, and my own. Find a warm sleeping bag or some dry socks for someone who’s trying to survive outside. Make a cup of tea for a guest who’s come in and needs a safe space. So much of our daily work is tending to bodies. Even when all is well with those bodies. And it is rare that all is well with our bodies.

If the meaning of Christmas is that God is with us, and the meaning of Easter is that God is still with us, maybe the meaning of the story of bodily resurrection is that God is with us in our lived, physical experience, not just our spiritual one.

Richard Swanson writes: “Jesus eats. That implies that the real world is as significant to the Resurrected Messiah as it is to us. Jesus eats. That implies that Resurrection works out its meaning in the real world, not in heaven.”

There’s maybe always danger in insisting on binaries. There’s maybe some danger in insisting that the resurrection was only spiritual, or only physical. If we insist it’s only physical, we lose out on the ways this story can be meaningful for everyone everywhere all at once. We miss the ways it speaks to and for our souls.

But if we insist the resurrection was only spiritual, maybe we miss the ways that God, in the resurrection, affirms our bodies as good and as deserving of good, as holy, as how the divine work happens in the world.

Part of the insistence on a bodily resurrection is to say, “Our bodily experience matters. It is who and how we are.”

Those who wrote the story felt its terror and its joy in their bodies. They lived in an occupied territory. War was not far from their homes. They’d just seen their friend executed by the state.

They knew what it was to be hungry. They knew what it was to wander during the day and not know where they’d lay their head at night.

And they knew what it was to feast with friends. They knew what it was to experience both sickness and healing. They knew what it was to head out to sea in a boat, to be soaked to the bone by the waves that crashed against them, to be held when they were shivering and scared. God was with them in all of that. For Jesus to come back and ask them for fish is reaffirmation that this glorious, horrifying, complicated world, and our humanity within it, matters.

And we inherit this story, and tell it today because we are still muscle and bone like this.

This is what we share with one another.

We inherit a story that says bodies that hide in bunkers matter, and bodies that don't make it to hiding in time matter.

Bodies that cross borders matter, and bodies that get caught crossing matter, and bodies that stay in the place they were born forever matter.

Bodies that march matter. Bodies that shout and sing matter. Bodies that are honored and bodies that are harmed matter and bodies that are politicized matter.

God is right there, in the bunker, at the border, shouting and singing, rejoicing and mourning, fighting and making peace, mothering us all.



Jesus' body wasn't tortured and killed just so he could rise again in spirit and overcome all that this world afflicts and offers, promising us on his way out that one day we'll be free from it all, too.

One way of telling the story is that Jesus comes back, muscle and bone like this, to affirm God's own commitment to this world, where we live in our bodies.

Bodies matter - when they laugh and dance and feast and make love. When they run and play and work and serve. When they are celebrated and when they are discriminated against. When they are born and when they die, learning to walk and forgetting how, and at every moment in between, God is there, living in and through those bodies.

What is the story those who come after us will inherit? How will it remind them of the holiness of this world, the sacredness of their own bodies? How can we tell the story so they might know the presence of God in all of it?

For a moment, center yourself in your own body - feel your feet on the ground, rest your hands on your heart, notice the rhythm of your breathing. You are alive, and God is alive in you, and in every body you meet. That's the good news we inherit, friends. That's one way of telling it, anyway.