

# Wednesday

WHY ARE YOU TROUBLED?' (LUKE 24:36-43): STEPHAN DE BEER

"Why are you troubled?" This might seem like a very out-of-touch question to ask at a time such as this. Is it not too obvious? Our hearts are troubled because of the uncertainty Covid-19 brings. We are troubled because people are hungry. We are troubled because where will people in our care go after lockdown? Will we actually broker long-term alternatives? Will they return to a life of survival or substances? Can we honour the desire of people to make a fresh, safe start?

And what about our closest loved ones? Our parents, our children? Will they be safe throughout this time? Why are you troubled this morning?

It was soon after the excitement of the two, who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus. They were just sharing this with the eleven closest companions of Jesus, huddling together, still lamenting his death. Suddenly, He appeared in their midst, saying, "Peace to you".

The Risen Christ is appearing this morning in your site saying: "Peace to you". Whatever you will face today, in your personal life or in the lives of your beloved community in the shelter: "Peace to you". When there are hurdles that seem too high, or challenges seemingly insurmountable: "Peace to you". And to those with you who often come from deeply troubled pasts, broken and bruised, Jesus says: "Peace to all of you". Not a false peace, and not just the absence of weapons. But a peace that surpasses all understanding, and mediates a sense of healing and connection, where previously everything was shattered. "Peace to you!".

Instead of their hearts being warmed by his offering of peace, his disciples responded in an alarmingly different way. They were frightened and terrified. They did not recognize his presence, thinking instead that maybe they saw a spirit, a ghost, a dead man talking to them. Sometimes the presence of Christ among us come in ways we do not recognise. We have been so socialized into fear and unbelief that the gestures of kindness and peace and wholeness offered to us, seem surreal, ghost-like, not of this world. We are unable to lean into the peace that wants to meet us in our troubled spaces. We allow the trouble to shape our minds and hearts, until we are defined by it.

Jesus saw that, and sees it now. "Why are you troubled?", He asks, and "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?". Have you not seen the good works of God in the past few days? Have you not seen the unleashing of kindness and abundance; the beauty of community; the ways in which love penetrated gated communities, suburban parks, inner city church halls? Look, and see, and believe. Jesus had to do more than comfort them with words. He had to show them his hands and feet. "Handle me and see", He said to them.

Even then, they still found it hard to believe. I wonder how he had to feel at this point. His closest companions unable to face him in this new reality. There comes a point in our own journeys when doubt sets in. Is any of this worth it? Will there be a better tomorrow? Was the stone really rolled away? Will the virus end, some times? How many more will die? Is this of God? Is this the Christ? Are these his hands and feet?

When our hearts are most troubled, He appears and says, "Peace to you". And when we cannot hear these words and embrace them, or our faith succumbs to doubt and disbelief, then Jesus resorts to a much more human posture, simply asking: "Have you any food here?" Not very spiritual. Nothing profound. It does not say that suddenly their eyes were opened. But I wonder whether this was not their moment of recognition, even if they did not say so. At his most human, when he did what he has often done with them, and with those called 'sinners' and 'outcasts', he did not now again.

He ate in their presence. They gave him fish and honeycomb. And then he started to remind them of what he told them before his cruel death.

In places of great brokenness, our good-sounding words and profound spiritual acts, are not always what make the change. It is when we ask: "Have you any food here?", being our human selves among fellow human travelers, that the recognition comes – Christ among us, broken bread, poured out wine, shared for troubled times, so we too can have peace.

Even during Covid-19, when Jesus asks, "Why are you troubled?", we will do well to make space, for him and all strangers at the table; for his peace to break through; for his mercy to be new every morning; for the power of his Spirit to roll away yet another stone. "Peace to you", today.

Prayer

My heart is troubled in me, Lord  
Our hearts are broken and pierced.

Our doubts forever growing  
Our faith frail and feeble

Come dine with us,  
embracing us with your pierced hands  
Come dine with us,  
let your kindness remove all doubt  
And your presence all fear

May the peace of the  
Lord be with us today.

Amen