

## **Post Resurrection Appearances**

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32; I Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31; Psalm 16 3-30-08**

Over the years I have had the privilege of having people share many things with me that have happened in their lives. Good things and difficult things. Most of these events are understandable human adventures. But, every now and then things happen that are out of the ordinary and that puzzle them and make me stop and think.

One event I remember very clearly took place many years ago when the custodian at my home church tragically died after he was struck by a train while riding his motorcycle. He had waited at a crossing while one train approached and passed. There were no gates at the crossing and he started across the tracks as the caboose passed him. There was another train that was going the other way, hidden by the first that hit him. He was well loved at our church and people were devastated by his loss. He left behind a wife and seven children.

A while after his death I asked his widow how she was doing. She admitted to some ups and downs but also mentioned that she had “seen Rudi” a week or so before our conversation. He had told her he was all right and that it was time for her to get on with life. She told me that I probably thought she was crazy. I didn’t. I had heard similar stories before and I have heard a lot more since. It seems in every such instance someone has appeared to assure others that all is well with him or her. People reporting these events have told me that they are fully awake when they have seen a loved one and they know it was not a dream. They sensed there was a presence with them. My mother told me, a few months following the death of my father, that he had come and sat at the foot of her bed and told her that he was fine where he was. He had suffered a long and difficult illness and a miserable death. My mother had suffered with him. She, too, thought I would suspect she was crazy. I didn’t.

In our reading from the gospel of John, Jesus appeared to several people at one time to assure them that he was fine and that he was going on to the next level of life. He had told them over and over again that this would happen. But, for them, as for us, this was a difficult concept to grasp. They needed facts as much as we do. In the realm of faith facts are sometimes hard to come by. How those early followers responded, we will never know with certainty.

We need to remember that John’s gospel was the last written. It was composed about 60 years after Jesus’ death and the amazing events that took place in the days following. Until the story was written down it had existed as oral tradition complete with all the alterations any story passed from mouth to ear encounters. So, getting down to the essential truth of the story of Jesus and the post resurrection appearances is in the hands of the scholars and scientists. It is most likely that none of the authors of the gospels were direct witnesses of the events that took place.

We might like to have Jesus appear to us in our day and age to assure us that we are on the right track in the way we practice our faith. Some of us might even like to have him come to us to answer our doubts, as did Thomas. But, there should be no need for this type of event. We have the record of what those early followers believed and the record of his life and teachings. We have a good blueprint for our existence. We only

need to consider it and begin to build on it. It is always amazing what we can accomplish when we begin to live lives patterned on his. Of course we have failures--we are human. But we should know that because of the understanding and forgiveness of God we always have another chance to get things right. God offers us new opportunities to try again and to find our various ways through the maze of life.

When we choose to follow a new pathway closer to the way of Christ, we, ourselves, become "post resurrection appearances" to others. Did you ever think of that? We are meant to be the reflection of Jesus in all we say and do and think. Others should be able to look at us and see that we are his followers no matter how imperfect we might be. In our attempts to live as he asked us and instructed us to, we reveal God's nature as he did.

We personify the love and forgiveness God has for God's creatures by offering love and forgiveness to others without considering the cost. We might never get that love and all that forgiveness back. But, living in a Christ-like manner is never living for what it is we might get from a relationship or from life.

When we are at our best we reveal the great patience God has with us. Instead of exploding at others over the slightest problem or disagreement we need to back off a bit and consider the problem before us. Counting to ten never hurts. It often allows us to approach what is going on with a new insight always valuing the other person and his or her opinion, as we would like to be valued. This is not easy. We like to react and sometimes overreact when we feel we have been injured. That is simply a waste of energy.

We have been called to share hope with others—the hope that this life will become better and that there will be a life beyond this one. Jesus was a great deliverer of hope. Hope that things can be made better here during this earthly life and hope that we all will be in the presence of God in the life that follows this one.

When we realize how we are to live to keep the ways of Jesus alive, we can do nothing but follow and allow the beauty of Jesus to be seen in us now and forevermore.

*-- Amen*