

April 18, 2021

Texts: Psalm 4; Luke 24: 36b-48

Title: "Party Crasher"

I don't know if you've ever heard of Fred Karger. Fred earned the unofficial title of the "World's Greatest Party Crasher." Over the years, Fred has crashed hundreds of high-profile parties and celebrity events. He even ended up several years ago on the stage at the Academy Awards and at the White House Correspondents' Dinner. Fred Karger claims there's no high-profile party or wedding or funeral or political event he can't crash. He says the key to being a successful party crasher is to look confident, as if you belong there, and nobody will question you.

Our Bible verses today make me think of Fred Karger and the "art" of party-crashing. This time, though, the party crasher was Jesus. But you know, it wasn't a party until he showed up there. Before he got there, in fact, things were kind of gloomy.

Jesus wasn't exactly an uninvited guest in this story, but he was definitely unexpected. After his death on the cross, his disciples were trying to sort out the meaning of the reports they'd been getting that he was appearing to people. It was confusing. Was it a hoax or was some kind of ghost?

Then suddenly it happened. The disciples were gathered together in one place and the crucified Christ himself stood among them! His disciples were startled and frightened. Then Jesus said to them, "Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, it's me!"

Luke tells us that “in their joy they were disbelieving.” It was too wonderful to be true. And yet here he was, raised from the dead. Talk about bringing life to a party! No wonder they had difficulty believing. Some persons still have that problem today. Many want to believe but something holds them back. Maybe if they could see his scars, it would make a difference. Why? Several reasons.

For one thing, some people have difficulty believing that God really cares about hurting people that much—that he would give His life for them. A

Savior with scars in his hands and feet and side? Some of us are more comfortable with an impersonal God who may have created everything but is not a personal God. The idea of God with nail prints in his hands and feet and side because of He loved us that much is an idea that some aren't ready for.

The divine Creator of everything came to earth and suffered and died to say to us that no one on this earth is beyond God's love and concern.

In trying to deal with the meaning of the cross on which Christ died, the early church came to understand that those nail prints in his hands and feet should have been ours. But God so loved the world that he sent his own Son to bear the burden brought about by the sins of us all. Can you believe that God really cares about you that much?

One way to know something about God's extravagant love is to have parents that love us and I know that not everyone has the best of experiences but I hope and pray that all of you have or have had people in your life that have loved you unconditionally. My parents, God bless them, were there for me many times in

my younger years to bail me out of trouble I had gotten myself into. Their scars, if you will, would have been the pain and sorrow they felt when I was going the wrong direction. And yet they were always there for me.

And of course, God's love is even greater. It's hard to believe that God loves us that much, but his scars are a reminder.

Secondly, there are some who simply have difficulty believing that life really goes on beyond the tomb. It seems too wonderful to believe that there's a world beyond this one—a place in which that which dies here is resurrected to new life there. But friends, this belief is at the heart of our faith and it affects how we live right now.

It's hard, of course, for most of us to face the thought of dying. In the cartoon, "Family Circus" the family is evidently returning from a funeral. The mother says to the kids in the back seat: "Well, yes—we'll see Granddad someday when we go to heaven." With that, the smallest child in the family says, "Could I just wait in the car?"

None of us wants to die. But that's life. No one gets to wait in the car and yet, we were created for life, not death. Because Christ lives we, too, shall live. Do you believe that?

But perhaps more significantly, most people don't want to deal with the implications of those two truths. What if Jesus really did rise from the grave, what does that mean for us today? What if there really is a God who's intimately concerned with our lives? What does it mean if this life really is but a prelude to

life eternal? And what difference would it make if we could see the hands and feet and side of the risen Christ? Would it cause us to take more seriously our walk with Him? Would it have some effect on the goals we've set for our lives? After all, if life is indeed eternal, some of our goals are going to seem awfully short-sighted and self-serving even, are they not?

A preacher once asked, "Has Jesus crashed your pity party?" Know there's more to life than death. Those who live their lives in the light of eternity never run out of a purpose for living.

So, how are we living in response to God's forever love and forever life? That's your assignment. Are we living as if we really believed it? Answer that question today and you'll be in a good place. Amen!