

Pastor Chris Matthis  
Epiphany Lutheran Church, Castle Rock, Colorado  
Easter 3, Series B  
Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Sermon: Hands and Feet<sup>1</sup>

Texts: Luke 24:36-49

Focus: The risen Jesus gives us peace.

Function: That they would take comfort in the literal, physical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Structure: Story Applied

Locus: "I believe that Jesus Christ... has redeemed me... with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom..., just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true" (SC, 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of Apostles' Creed).

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

"And [Jesus] said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet" (Luke 24:38-39, ESV).<sup>2</sup>

Would you be able to identify somebody by hands and feet alone?<sup>3</sup> If you were flipping through the family photo album, would you recognize your mom and dad, brothers, and sisters simply by photo snapshots of their feet? Or, if you were a victim of a mugging, would you recognize your assailant in a police lineup in which you weren't allowed to see their faces but only the backs of their hands? We are so used to recognizing people's faces, that I wonder if we could possibly identify them by the marks on their hands and feet: warts and wrinkles, cuts and callouses, ingrown toenails and hammertoes. Tattoos, rings, and conspicuous moles might help, but I'm not certain that I would be able to do that.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revision of a sermon originally preached on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, at Epiphany Lutheran Church, Castle Rock, Colorado.

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture references, unless otherwise indicated, are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, "Hands and Feet," in *Home by Another Way* (Lanham, Maryland: Cowley Publications, 1999), 119.

And yet in our Gospel lesson, we discover that Jesus proved his identity and resurrection to his disciples by showing them his hands and feet. “See my hands and feet, that it is I myself” (Luke 24:38). Not his voice, not his face, but his hands and feet were the marks of the risen Jesus. The same hands that multiplied the loaves and fishes, the same hands that pulled Peter out of the stormy sea, the same hands that never hesitated to reach out and touch the untouchable be they lepers, tax collectors, or “sinful” women.

And those feet! Those were the same feet that walked all over Galilee and Judea taking the itinerant preacher from place to place—the same feet that walked on water, the same feet which the disciples refused to wash at the Last Supper.

Jesus shows them his hands and feet. Perhaps that doesn’t surprise you. After all, they knew Jesus has been crucified. So, of course, why *wouldn’t* his nail-pierced hands and feet qualify as credentials? Isn’t that what so-called “doubting” Thomas (actually, *unbelieving* Thomas) wanted in last week’s Gospel lesson? “Unless I see in his wrists the mark of the nails and put my finger into the mark of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will most certainly never believe!” (John 20:25, CSM).<sup>4</sup> Today we discover that Thomas wasn’t the only unbeliever. The other disciples also have a hard time facing the facts of Jesus’ resurrection. They have a hard time facing *Jesus*.

And so he shows them his hands and feet. Jesus was put to death on the cross. But none of the apostles were there to see it happen, except for John. Only John and the women witnessed the death of their Lord and Master. All the rest of the Twelve had betrayed, abandoned, or denied him. As Zechariah prophesied, “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” (Zech. 13:7). The shepherd was struck, and indeed they scattered. Yet who can imagine the weight of that upon their conscience?

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<sup>4</sup> All Scripture references marked CSM are the author’s own, personal translation.

Who can imagine the weight of guilt on any of our consciences? We are all burdened down under the load of our sins, sorry and saddened by the grief and pain we've caused by our selfishness and recklessness. "We have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone" (*LSB*). Some of our sin we know; some is known only to God. The same was true of the apostles.

And so Jesus shows up and says, "Peace to you!" (Luke 24:36). *Shalom!* Peace! *Shalom* is the way to say "Hello!" in modern Israel today. But the peace that Jesus gives is not like the "peace" which the world gives (John 14:27). The peace of Christ is more than just a "holy howdy." It is a word of compassion and forgiveness. As St. Paul writes in Romans 5, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). *Peace* is a word of absolution, which is why the peace of God passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

And because his disciples are still fearful of the Romans—and even more afraid they are seeing a ghost—Jesus shows them his hands and feet. "Touch me," he says (v. 39). "Handle me, grope me—really check me out!"<sup>5</sup> Take a good, long look and see what you missed before: the marks of the nails in my hands and feet. Behold what you weren't there to witness when I died. See how much I love you, what I was willing to do *for you*. I love you so much that I died for you, even when you couldn't even stay awake and pray with me for one hour in the Garden, even when you couldn't summon the courage to follow me to the cross. But I love you and forgive you. Peace to you! Peace be with you..."

So they look and touch. They feel him out to find if it's really Jesus. (Humorously, in the end, only when Jesus eats a piece of fish do they finally believe he is alive because nothing

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<sup>5</sup> The Greek verb used for "touch" in 24:39 is *psēlaphaō*, a rare word that occurs only 4 times in the NT (Luke 24:39; Acts 17:27; Heb. 12:18; 1 John 1:1). *Haptomai* is the more typical verb for touch.

says, “I’m alive” like a healthy appetite!). Then Jesus opens their minds to understand the Scriptures and reminds them that *this* is the way it *had to happen!* “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46-47).

First Jesus reminds them of *his* part: dying on the cross for their sins—and *our* sins—and then rising again to give us eternal life. That is our salvation.

But there’s still more to be done: the important business of preaching repentance and forgiveness in Jesus’ name. “You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48). What things? Everything that Jesus said and did, everything that seems too good to be true—except that it is. Jesus is the doer of the deeds. We are witnesses. That is, we speak of what we see and hear. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are things you cannot keep to yourself.

The Bible says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom. 10:15). Jesus’ feet pierced by nails are beautiful because of the story they tell—“that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name” (Luke 24:46-47). That’s why Jesus shows them his hands and feet. Because scars tell a story. And the marks of the nails in Jesus’ hands and feet (the so-called *stigmata*) tell the beautiful, wonderful, true story of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Only because Jesus died and rose again can any of us say, “Peace to you!”

Jesus told his disciples that they were witnesses of these things. So they were, and so *we* are today. We are the Church, the body of Christ, Jesus’ hands and feet. Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again. We are witnesses of these things. And so our feet show

it—beautiful feet that bring Good News of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus to everyone we know (and even to the people we don't know). It's time to show Jesus' hands and feet to the rest of the world. Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!* Amen.