

John 20:19-21

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'

John 21:1-14

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

You Be Jesus
Rev. David Dalke
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You know, they say that exercise is good for us, and that walking is good, if we're able to do that, and I suspect that those two people that had been to an empty tomb now needed to walk, because when you walk it kind of clears your head, and I think they were probably so in wonderment about what they had seen, that they started to walk towards Emmaus. Now we have no idea who they were. They were having a contentious kind of a talk, so now I'm wondering, well, maybe they were married, or maybe they were just good friends, but they knew how to be confrontive with each other. They were having this major talk about what they had seen. Someone told them a tomb was empty, and now they're walking to Emmaus, and they're talking about this. By the way, Emmaus today would be about twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. Back in Jesus' day, there was a rocky road, literally a rocky road that was about nine miles. So they were on that nine-mile trek, and all of a sudden a stranger comes up and starts to walk with them, and they don't recognize the stranger, and the stranger said, "What are you talking about?" and they

said, “Well, are you the only one that’s been in Jerusalem all week and doesn’t know what happened?” Now, the stranger is Jesus. Can you imagine saying that, and I’m picturing him inside saying, “If you only knew...” but instead, he said, “What happened? Tell me what happened.” And they recount, as they’re all walking now along this road, they recount how a man named Jesus came into this big city on this little beast of an animal, and then he was in a trial, and then he was crucified, and then he died and they put him in a tomb, I think it was, I don’t know if this is exactly right, Joseph of Arimathea or someone, I don’t know, tell me later about it, that’s where he owned the tomb, and that’s where he was. Then he said, “Some of our friends went there this morning and they found that that tomb was empty, so we’ve just been talking about that.” And about that time, they arrive at Emmaus, and they invite the stranger, whom they still don’t know, to come in and have some supper with them. They’ve been walking all day these nine miles. At the time that the food is spread on the table, and the wine is poured, and the bread is in front of them, and it’s almost like a communion, and Jesus at that moment offers a blessing. He’s there, they ask him to come in, and not to impose himself upon them, he accepts the invitation, and then he blesses the food. And in the blessing of that food, in that moment, their eyes are opened, and all of a sudden they realize, this has to be Jesus. The words are familiar. The blessing is familiar. Their eyes were opened in the moment of the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine.

I can imagine what must have happened. Think of the emotion that must have accompanied that time. What would they have done? They were probably laughing, they were probably crying, they were probably in meditation... who knows what all the gamut of emotions they must have experienced at that moment of awareness – “This is a man whom we thought was dead and is now alive” – and it was in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine. It’s the same thing that I saw happen here at this altar, about the last time we took communion, right here at this communion rail, I was sitting right here and my good friend Andrew, who is playing in the bell choir, he’s the one up here with the red face right now, probably. Andrew was kneeling here at this communion rail with his friend Dana, and I looked down, and I saw them just in meditation, and then I saw them laugh. And they were really laughing, and they were suddenly quiet. And then they laughed again, and then I saw them talk to each other a little bit. And I found out later that what had happened was, during the sermon, Andrew, who was sitting in the back, had taken his shoes off and left them under the pew, and he walked up here to take communion in his sock feet. And when his eyes were opened, he realized he didn’t have his shoes on... I sat there and thought, “This is what it’s all about” - that no matter who we are and what we are, what our gender is, what our background is, what our history is, even if we’re shoeless we are accepted right here at this communion rail. And Jesus say, “Drink and eat,” and our eyes are opened.

But that didn’t happen to very many people after the resurrection. The Bible tells us, the Scriptures tell us how many times Jesus appeared before people, because they were in disbelief. This week we’ve just been in, people were in disbelief. He knocked on the door where the disciples were hiding, and he said, “Peace be to you.” They weren’t sure. He went to the sea of Tiberias, and stood there and realized they weren’t catching any fish, and he said, “Throw your nets on the right side of the boat.” They got so much fish they

couldn't even bring it in. And then he cooked the fish for them. And while they sat there and they ate and they drank their wine and they ate their food and their bread, their eyes were opened, but they weren't sure. What would have happened to us, what would it have been like for you? Let's not just read this story, let's be that story. Let's all be there. We watch the pounding and we see the pounding of the nails, and we watch the agony. We see the soldiers take Jesus down from the cross. We're there, we're watching that. And all of a sudden he goes to a tomb, and we witness this, on that Saturday, the Saturday after the crucifixion, the *Jerusalem World News* comes out with a headline that says "Jewish Teacher Crucified." And the next morning, he's gone. One author-theologian said one time, "He just got up. We don't know what happened." And we're in mystery over that, and then Sunday afternoon, another edition of the paper comes out, it says "Extra edition – Extra, extra." We all grew up in those days – "Extra, read all about it. Mystery surrounds a missing body in the tomb. Jesus, son of humble parents, Joseph and Mary, crucified, dead, and buried, and on the third day, he's gone." What would we have felt? Where would we have gone? What would we have been? Who would we have talked to? Would we have just gone off by ourselves? Would we have huddled again together and talked? Would we have walked in disbelief along our roads? Sure, we would have. And you know what? We would have discovered that he's alive. He is alive. He is alive. And I believe that story. I believe he's alive, because I don't think anybody could have made that up. I don't think – you know, it's not a sweet little story of everybody living happily ever after. It's fraught with discord, it's fraught with complexity, it's fraught with wonderment. That's why it's real. He is alive.

Now the second thing I say to you about that comes out of the words of a mom. She's making breakfast for her two boys, and the boys are, Billy is six and Ryan is four, and they're sitting at the table and Mom is cooking pancakes, and they smell great, and the boys are fighting over who's going to get the first pancake, and they're really fighting. And mom seizes this moment, as we all seize these moments, as a teaching moment. And she says, "Boys," to her older son Billy and her younger son Ryan. "Boys, if Jesus were here right now, he would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake.'" To which Billy the older brother turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus." You be Jesus. You be Jesus, that's right.

I have seen a lot of people being Jesus lately. I sat in a living room with a family, and they asked me if I'd baptize their little boy, he's two years old. Good friends of our family, and they had all their relatives that were gathering, and it was one of those moments where they said, "We can't make it down here to the church but we could do it at a certain time." So I went over there. Little Jacob is two years old. They said, "Would you baptize him?" I said, "Sure." So we're all sitting there, and I'd talked to Jacob ahead of time, just a little bit, showed him the water and they had a special bowl, and I showed him the water, and I told him what was going to happen, and I handed out a little ritual, we all read it, and then it came time for the baptism. I put my hands on his head and offered some words, and when I was finished, little Jacob looked up at me, two years old, and he just kind of smiled. Then he put his hands into the water and he put it on top of my head, and I got baptized again. And his cousin Lauren, two and a half years old, little Lauren came running over, and she put her hands in the water, and those two little

children went all over that living room and baptized everybody. Baptized every single one of us, and all I could think about was how that room that we called the living room, all of a sudden really became a Living Room, of people who knew what it was like to be Jesus, to protect those children, to care for those children that sat right down here, to offer them the best we can, the best example we know how to be. We need to be Jesus. In that moment, it was so real. We need to rebaptize ourselves is what it means to be Jesus.

It was in Eastern Kansas, it was in a very bitterly cold night, it was on a Saturday night, it was seven o'clock in the evening, and it was dark, and it was so cold out that it was best to stay inside. It was at my son-in-law's, and Pat got up, they'd ordered a pizza and they didn't even want to go out, and the pizza had been delivered and they were sitting around the table. Pat got up, turned the television off and said, "We're not watching television tonight. I know it's your favorite program, but we're not going to watch it. We're all going to sit here." He said, "We have so much to be thankful for. What I want us to do is, I want all of us as a family, the three children and Pat and Marybeth, I want us to say what we're grateful for and thankful for and who we're concerned about." So the children and everybody started to talk, and one of them said, "I'm concerned and I'm praying for Grandma Cheryl, her disease," and someone else said, "I'm concerned about my friend at school whose dog died," and someone else in the family said, "I know there are a lot of poor people, a lot of poor children in our school, and every time I go there I see they're in kind of ragged clothes, and they don't eat much at noon..." and just then there was a knock on the door. Right in the middle of that, a knock on the door. Marybeth got up with pizza in hand and went and opened the door, and there was a little boy there, about eleven years old, and he had a lanyard around his neck with a tag, you know, it said what school he represented, and he had boxes of Twix bars he was selling. Seven o'clock on a Saturday bitterly cold night. Marybeth said he could hardly talk. His lips were blue, and he was so cold, and she said, "Would you like to step inside?" And he came inside, and then he looked at her and he said, "Do you mind if I have a piece of pizza?" At that moment Cooper ran from the table, gave him a piece of pizza. Pat went into the bedroom and got seven dollars and ninety-five cents out to buy the box of Twix bars, and a little bit of extra money, and came back and handed it to him, and he stayed for a few minutes and ate some pizza and warmed up, and then he left, and after he left they all sat there, and it was time now for some kind of dessert, and so they opened up the Twix bars, passed them out, and as they ate, Cooper said, "This is the best Twix bar I've ever eaten."

You be Jesus. You be Jesus, welcome the person who is sick and homeless and cold and needs food. Welcome them in. You be Jesus. When did I see you naked and clothe you? When did I see you hungry and feed you? You be Jesus. We all need to be Jesus, especially when that cable snapped, years ago, and the chairlift started to bounce, and a man was pitched out of it and he died, and a young boy and girl that were friends of mine, she was in the seventh grade, he was in the ninth grade, were pitched straight out of the chairlift because of that whipping motion of the cable as it had snapped, and as they went up in the air and came back down, Dina went right into the seat, and Dirk reached out and missed grabbing for the chairlift and fell twenty feet to the snow and broke both of his wrists, has his spleen removed. He was in terrible shape, terrible shape. An hour and a half later they got him to the hospital. His mother called me and said, "Have you

heard?" and I said "No.". She said, "Dirk is in really bad shape, David. Can you talk with him? I've got him here." I said, "I'll be glad to, do you want me to come?" She said, "No, just talk to him." He got on the phone and said, "Hello?" I said, "Dirk, it's David. What do you need from me, Dirk? I'm sorry this happened." He said, "Oh, oh, I don't even want to live, David." Three days he laid there like that. Nothing was motivating him. His mother kept calling and saying, "There's something wrong, we can't even get him to feel good about life." I started to think, "What is it that's missing? What can we do, if anything?" Then I remembered that Dirk had a hero, and it was in the time when Julius Erving was playing basketball for the Philadelphia 76ers basketball club, and he was just about ready to retire. I used to kid Dirk, because I'd go by their house every night after work and he'd be out shooting baskets, and I'd stop and shoot hoops with him, and I'd kid him and say, "You know, Dr. J and I are really good friends, Dirk." He didn't buy that, but he kind of didn't know for sure. And I had a lot of fun talking about that. I'd say, "Yeah, you know, in the summertime, Dirk, I go back to New York City and play in the summer leagues there with Dr. J. He and I are really good partners." He'd say, "Yeah, yeah." Look at me – what do you think about that? He'd say "Yeah, yeah." But do you know what" I thought, "This is his hero. This is his hero."

So I called Philadelphia Basketball Club, and I talked to a guy in the PR department named Tim, and I said, "Tim, we've had an accident in Colorado." He said, "I read about it. I read about what happened." I said, "We've got a young man, he doesn't want to live. He needs something. He needs something." And I said, "His hero is Julius Erving." He said, "The club is playing ball right now, they're out for two days, but when he gets back I'll talk to him." I thought I'd never hear about it after that. I thought it was over. Five days later I get a telephone call, Dirk has since gone home from the hospital, and there's a person on the other end of the line. I said, "This is David Dalke," and I hear, "Dave!" and I say, "Who is this?" "It's Dirk!" I said, "Dirk? You sound like you're...." He said, "Dave, come over, I want to show you something." I said, "Okay, I'm getting ready to bring my malt machine over anyway, I want to make you a malt and give you some energy." He said, "Come here, come over come over!" I went over and he handed me an envelope as I walked in the door. It was a big envelope. He said, "Look in it!" I pulled out a picture, big picture. It was Julius Erving, and on it it said, "To Dirk – we're praying for you. Your friend, Julius Erving." He was standing there holding the ball like this, just looking into the camera. And then he said, "Go on, look some more" and there was another picture, and it showed him up there dunking the basketball like this, and it said "To Dirk, my friend, You're going to get better. Dr. J." And all I could think about was, "Man, I want those pictures."

And then he said, "Read the letter." There was a letter, I opened it up and I looked at it. It started, "Dear Dirk, one of my spies has told me about your accident." The it went on down and it said, "We are praying for you to get well." Then it said, "But Dirk, we can only do so much. You've got to pray, too. And you've got to believe in yourself. And you've got to believe you're special, and you've got to believe you're worth something. You've got to do your part, too." I read that letter. I went to the kitchen and I started to stir up the malt. Two of his buddies came in the door and he was showing them this stuff that he'd gotten in the mail, and I heard him say, "See that guy in the kitchen there? He

played ball with Julius Erving.” Now I’m here to tell you, I have chosen to live with that deception, and I pray for forgiveness every night.

You be Jesus. You be Jesus. Find someone who doesn’t believe they’re worth it. Find someone who doesn’t think they’re special. Find somebody who doesn’t believe in themselves, and you reach out to them, and remind them that they are so unique, they are a child of God, and they are worth it. You be Jesus. You be Jesus with them. You know, before Jesus died, he was a compelling figure, and his message was compelling. But after the Resurrection, in all those appearances he made to all those folks, those followers and disciples, he became an experience of faith, an experience of faith for the people from the corner of Stover and Elizabeth Streets. You be Jesus. Amen.