

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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As we move through the Easter season, we're invited into explore new life and resurrection in the texts. So too, as we continue the "A Place" sermon series that reflects our *A Place for All* campaign, we're looking at these readings with a lens toward how we are called to create "a place" to best live out God's vision. Holding all of that, three central verbs struck me in today's reading. They are meet, teach, and send.

Last week we heard a similar reading from John, but Luke put a little bit different spin on the resurrection appearance with the disciples. The disciples were together when Jesus appeared. They were afraid, startled, and terrified to see Jesus, at which point Jesus showed them his wounded hands and feet. But some were still in disbelief, so he ate a fish to prove he was not a ghost or a figment of their imagination. You see, the first thing Jesus did was to meet the disciples where they were. He did not rebuke, scold, or shame them for their doubts or their disbelief. Rather, Jesus continued to meet them in the moment.

After he met them, he taught them. He reminded them of what the Scriptures said, he retold them of their shared experiences, and he pointed forward to where God always leads us; that is, out the door into the world. Jesus told them to go in his name to all nations. Or to put that another way, Jesus invited them to embody his spirit and do as he had done. Jesus sent them to respond to injustice, to help the poor and the marginalized, to notice the unexpected

places that God reveals Godself, and to co-create a place that welcomes all people. Meet. Teach. Send.

While we might see today's scripture as being about the disciples. This story emphasizes the same invitation we are given in our baptism. Moments ago, Lillian was baptized. She was met just as she was in the moment. She didn't need to be a certain age, or have certain characteristics, or be in the right mood. In baptism, God meets us where we are with all our fears, doubts, uncertainties, and shame. Throughout our lives we are taught by our parents, our baptismal sponsors, our family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors what it means to experience resurrection. That is, what it means to forgive and be forgiven, what it means to love and be loved, and what it means for an ending to be a new beginning.

Then after we are met and taught, we are sent to do the same. We are sent to embody the radical love of God, to share in the goodness that we have received, and to be a beacon of hope in the darkness of life. // Meet. Teach. Send.

That is the place we strive to build here. Sure, we literally build it by making the building more accessible to all people during our *A Place for All* campaign. We also do it in Bible Study, worship, and prayer. We share the resurrection as we journey with our refugee family, feed the hungry with The Night Ministry, and stock our Little Free Pantry. But we also live it out as we offer our space for 12-step groups to gather, learn, and leave. We embody Christ's spirit as we bring joy by opening our doors to music, theater, and the arts. We live out God's vision as we offer our building for low-cost arts-based

summer camps that transform students, liberate parents, and say that all are welcome.

You see, here at Wicker Park Lutheran, we strive to live out God's call to meet, teach, and send. And, it's not lost on me that today both Vicar Taylor and Seminarian Nicholas have the day off. And soon, this will be our typical experience during the summer. And when we officially say goodbye to them in the next month or two, we will know that we have had a holy experience. We have met them where they are in their journey, we have taught them about this place and what it means to be a leader in the church, and then we will send them into the world. On occasion we'll see them again, as we have with Vicky, Bethany, Paisley, and many more. Yet, it won't be the same. For God's vision is not to preserve a moment in time, to ensure that our building never changes, or our community remains stagnate. Instead, like the disciples, God invites us to dream and change, to welcome all people, and to allow all people to deeply learn and grow, for the expressed purpose of sending them into the world.

Friends, that is the gift of today's gospel. What we do outside these doors in our daily lives is what proclaims Christ risen. It's our calling to meet people where they are; teach them about love, generosity, understanding, and peace; and then to send them off to do the same. For that is what God does to us and for us. And in this holy work we are participants in and recipients of God's resurrection. Amen.