

Luke 24: 36b-48
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Zeek's an old school kind of guy. From the generation where men didn't talk about their feelings. Where a man's work took him out of the house and away from the children. And a woman's work was to make sure all of that ran smoothly. Where a good marriage was one where there was food on the table, a roof over their heads and healthy kids in school.

But the children are grown and while all four live nearby, there is not the same demands upon him nor his wife. And so, the marriage is going through a turn on the rollercoaster.

Former roles that kept life in order can no longer be relied upon and Zeek senses that he's hanging onto what was by a thread.

His wife, Camille, is rediscovering herself, going through a renaissance, and in that process is expressing that she is no longer satisfied with the status quo in their marriage. She has insisted that they go to marriage counseling. It's the last place on earth that he ever thought he would find himself. They had a good marriage, great kids, things were fine.

But fine was no longer cutting it. His wife is tired of his angry outbursts and wants a deeper connection.

Without the kids and the crazy schedules holding them together, their lives are exposed. And she doesn't like what she sees: an empty marriage in which the partners no longer know how to communicate with each other, and perhaps don't even know each other.

He looks miserable. Preoccupied. Simply not himself. And the eldest son, Adam, asks him one evening what's going on. Dad confesses that he and Mom are in counseling. It's enough to shock the words right out of his son, trying to picture his gruff, no-nonsense, car repairing, beer drinking, basketball playing dad in therapy.

When he regains his composure, Adam kindly prods around the edges to find out more. Dad explains that the marriage is fine, but that Mom says she needs some changes in the way they are together.

Zeek turns to his son, a pained look in his eye, as he explains to Adam that Camille expects him to communicate better, listen better. He says, "I'm supposed to listen more fully and tell her, 'I hear you. I see you.'"

There's a long pause before Adam - keeping the smile from his face and his voice - asks, "what does *that* mean?" Rubbing his head, Zeek answers, "I have *no* idea."¹

It's a tender moment as Zeek exposes himself to his son. Showing how much he cares about Camille even in the midst of honestly not understanding what he's doing or why he's doing it.

¹ *Parenthood*, Season 2, Episode 1.

It seems that in that scene from *Parenthood* both Adam and Zeek miss the fact that this is more than simply a comment on Zeek's physiology.

It is more than whether or not the ears and eyes are being trained in the right direction. It is supposed to be about listening with the whole self, paying attention to the other with one's whole being. So that the other is seen and heard into existence, so that the other's life matters in the presence of another. Camille wants to be sure that Zeek is truly present to her.

Zeek doesn't fully get it and is willing to admit this to his son. But the tenderness and beauty here lies in Zeek's willingness to keep trying. His desire is such that he wants to be present to his wife and her needs, even when it makes absolutely no sense to him.

I think of those early disciples. A lot of what they were going through didn't make much sense to them either. Look at me, Jesus says. See this here. Watch me eat. Let me convince you that this is to be believed. Let me try to lead you toward understanding what this all means.

They were confused, frightened, hiding. Throughout the previous week they had heard reports of Jesus sightings. The women at the tomb, Peter, the two on the road to Emmaus. News had been trickling in, but no one really knew what to believe. It was too outlandish, too ridiculous, too beyond words or understanding.

Returned from the dead? There was no way for the disciples to compute this.

The only answer was for Jesus to show up and talk to them, show them. Appeal to their senses, as a way into their hearts and minds. Meet them where they needed to be met - hear their confusion and meet it with compassion. Allow physical evidence to align with spiritual presence in a moment of Aha.

And *we*, friends, do not really fully hear and see Christ. Not as profoundly as God designed. Sometimes, if we're perfectly honest, we're just playing along like Zeek. "I hear you. I see you." Hoping to make it work. Playing along in order to remain in some form of relationship with Christ. But if we're perfectly honest, there's a lot of times when the full import of the resurrection just eludes us - like the state of the world for the ant.²

It is not all for naught. There is both power and grace gifted to us because of our desire, the attempt, on our part, to understand, to make sense of it all, the meaning of the resurrection in our lives.

And there are times, my friends, when we get it right. When we do the hard thing, however imperfectly, when we do the hard thing of showing up for another of God's creatures. When we sit by the side of a dying friend or family member, knowing that they are never going to get

² Reference to a Frederick Buechner writing in *Beyond Words*, "Although we have been taught better, it is easier to assume that nothing that lies beyond the reach of our five senses is entirely real than to acknowledge that what we know about reality through the five senses is roughly the equivalent of what an ant crawling across the front page of the *New York Times* knows about the taste of the world." Page 365.

better, knowing that we are there simply to accompany them in their transition. We get it right when we listen without judgment to a loved one explain to us their story of addiction, or homelessness or infidelity. We get it right when we see, really see, the vulnerable in our midst and stand by their side.

That is when we get it right. When all of a sudden we *get* the reason for the resurrection. When the physical evidence and the spiritual power line up together and for a moment we live in the understanding of what God's gift means for us. When we hear and we see with not just our senses but with a deep awareness of the spirit of God flowing behind it all, present in each person, in every situation.

That's what I find so heartening in this passage from Luke. Jesus, with kindness and love, shows up to be there physically for those first disciples - look, see, hear - and transforms the disciples' weakness into profound possibility. "You are witnesses of all this," says Jesus.

Friends, *you are* witnesses. God transforms the confusion you feel through your willingness, your desire, your attempt, to show up and see and hear one another - with God's grace and power at work behind the senses.

Like Zeek, we don't always *get* what we are doing. But we do it, instinctually knowing that listening with our ears and seeing with our eyes, with the help of the spirit of God, can lead to much more. It can lead to lives transformed - ours and everyone's.

"I hear you. I see you." May we move through our days with the desire to meet the world with such attentiveness. And trust that the reason for the resurrection will be at work behind our feeble attempts - turning those efforts into sparks of new life.

Amen.