



“Christ’s Humanity is Essential”

Pastor Andy CastroLang

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Scripture (CEB):

Luke 24:36-48

³⁶ While they (the two disciples who had hurried back to Jerusalem from Emmaus) were saying these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ³⁷ They were terrified and afraid. They thought they were seeing a ghost.

³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you startled? Why are doubts arising in your hearts? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It’s really me! Touch me and see, for a ghost doesn’t have flesh and bones like you see I have.”⁴⁰ As he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ Because they were wondering and questioning in the midst of their happiness, he said to them, “Do you have anything to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of baked fish. ⁴³ Taking it, he ate it in front of them.

⁴⁴ Jesus said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you— that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. ⁴⁶ He said to them, “This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Sermon:

You don’t have to be a recovering Roman Catholic, or ex-Mormon, or ex-evangelical, or religious at all, to know that almost all of us carry messages that make us feel less than...

Less than whole. Less than worthy. Less than wonderful, beautiful, safe and valued in our own skins.

I knew from a young age that I loved God and wanted to live for God, and with God in my heart, always.

But I also grew up wanting to get married, be pregnant and feel a baby move inside me, nurse my babies, build a family, fill a home with yummy meals. I knew I wanted a family home, with toys you stepped on by accident that hurt like hell, and pets who peed in unacceptable places and stank up the house, and scraped knees that were filled with grit and blood, and hugs and kisses that made the pain go away. I wanted a life like that.

And in the tradition that formed me, I felt that was looked down upon. I was told that centering my life on God was incompatible with being a mommy, or being the lover and friend to the man I wanted to marry.

It was suggested that if I really loved God, then I would be willing to dedicate my life to God as a nun, give myself up to a celibate community of women, in service to the church and the world.

Now, nuns are awesome.

But I never wanted to be a nun.

I wanted love and intimacy, I wanted babies and nursing, and swimming naked at midnight in the Mediterranean.

I wanted all that my body and my senses could learn, explore, teach me.

And I was told that was bad, or at the very least, it was a lesser way, a selfish way toward God.

I don't agree.

And whether you are Protestant or Catholic - the body-hating, body-denigrating undercurrent of some Christian doctrine and practice is not Jesus' message, is not the good news of the gospel. It is not, I believe, God's truth.

From the time we talk happily about the "baby Jesus and Mary his mother" to the gory and heartbreaking death he suffered under Roman cruelty...to this text...this moment when the

resurrected Christ stands before his dearest friends and says, "I am no ghost"...there is the resounding message that

Our bodies are not something to cast off, to despise. Our bodies are good.

Jesus chose our bodies, Jesus is like us, embodied. From babyhood and messy diapers and a mother's breast, to the glorious resurrected body he shares in this gospel reading...holes in his hands and feet, fish in his mouth to chew...Jesus is God's messenger and that messenger lives and loves in his body.

Our bodies are more than just a vehicle for our souls.

Our bodies are something more than a brief interim for our future immortality.

Our human life is more than just a dim shadow (thank you very much, Plato).

We are not trapped in our flesh.

We are not crippled by our senses, our passion, our bodies!

God in Jesus, beyond any shadow of a doubt, has chosen our bodies, our embodied selves, and lets us know they are GOOD.

Since Genesis stories, they have been a good gift of a creative Creator. It's right there, in the front of your bible.

So, yes, theologically it is *essential* that we recognize Jesus our Christ in his body; his human body, at Easter. This confirms the message of the goodness of our embodied selves, our human selves, because Jesus shares in it with us, and stands, resurrected before his disciples, in a human body.

Oh sure, we have our temptations, we have our addictions and afflictions, we have our misuse of our bodies, we have cancer and so many sad things that happen to our bodies.

But our bodies were not made bad, base, evil, wretched.

The risen Christ **is in his body**, wounds and all.

The risen Christ is in some kind of body, that can come and go with his followers (Luke 24:13-31, John 21:1), walk through doors (John 20:19), eat fish; make no doubt about it....

Christ is no ghost and Christ is in his body.

And so today, in spite of the misuse of scripture, the distortions of either/or dualism from the Greeks, the contempt of flesh that comes from Manicheans, from Jansenists, from advertising today...

Hear this and hear it well...that body you are in...it is your gift from God. It is your home and it is an indispensable part of your humanity and your glory as God's creature. God has created them, and our bodies are beautiful, precious, important, filled with meaning and power.

Jesus rose from the dead, the earliest Christian church declared beyond the shadow of a doubt, into a body.

Again and again, the church leaders insisted, he was no ghost. Ignatius, an early Christian martyr, told people to "flee any who denied the reality of Christ's resurrected body" (letter of Ignatius to the Smyrneans), the 2nd letter of John confesses "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh", and Origen, a theologian of the third century quotes a non-canonical gospel, the gospel of Peter, in which the risen Christ tells the disciples, "I am not an incorporeal spirit". (Origen, *On First Principles*)

He rose from the dead...

Into his body, precious and beloved.

Now, it is not really clear what exactly that resurrected body did, and where it went, or exactly what sort of creature a resurrected person is.

Sacred literature and theologians, and folk like you and me, have been talking about it for a long, long time. Science may someday be able to tell us.

Maybe the bendy nature of time and space, the strangeness of quantum physics and the utter variety of all sorts of matter in the universe, will someday show us what the resurrected Christ was in that day, and is eternally.

We know he was matter; he was in a body. We make a big deal of his "being born of woman" every year at Christmastime!

The church says he ascended to God, in his body.

And that truth matters, for you and for me.

Because against all the hateful and negative body messages of our culture and all the horrible distortions of religious fanaticism,
We have this Easter truth:

Jesus is no ghost; he rose in his human body. That body, whatever a resurrected body is, is also his beloved self.

So are you. A beloved human being, in a body, a wonderful, unique body.

So go ahead and treasure the taste of chocolate or a home-grown tomato, the feel of the sun on your skin, the sensuous pleasure of a good massage, a face turned up to snowflakes, the precious skin of your lover.

You have been blessed with a body.

Bodies are not perfect.

Some of us struggle with many sorrows in our bodies, but nonetheless, these bodies are our homes.

They are beloved by God. Known by Jesus, shared by Jesus.

Acceptable and holy in God's sight.

Alleluia.

Thanks be to God for the good news of Easter; the resurrected Christ; human and divine, who died, and is resurrected alive, in a body!