

There are so many things I wish the scriptures told us about Jesus –
but don't!

I'd like to know what Jesus looked like.

I'd like to have some description of his personality.

But none of this is in the pages of the New Testament.

So it irks me, at least a little bit,

that given all the gospels DON'T tell us about Jesus,

Luke takes the time and makes the effort this morning
to make sure we know that what Jesus ate,
when he was with his friends after he rose from the dead,
was a piece of baked fish!

Did we need to know this?

I suppose someone could write a book
comparing what the scriptures tell us about Jesus
with what they don't tell us about him.

Allow me to test the waters here just a little...

Suppose I were to tell you

- that Jesus used to laugh at his disciples when they were at prayer?

Suppose I were to tell you

that Jesus believed he originally came

from the immortal realm of a place called Barbelo?

Suppose I were to tell you

that Jesus didn't really live among the people of his time

but rather occasionally appeared to his disciples,

and that sometimes he appeared to them as an adult,

and sometimes as a child,

and sometimes as an adult and a child at the same time?

Suppose I told you that the followers of Jesus

used to have visions of a temple where children were sacrificed?

Suppose I told you that Jesus wanted to be betrayed and crucified

just so that he could get out of his physical body?

Does all of that sound a little strange?

Well, if I told you such things,

I would be telling you what you would read

if you read the Gospel of Judas,

the recently publicized second-century manuscript

which was in the all the papers in the week before Easter.

And the gospel of Judas does sound strange, because it IS strange,

and because it comes from an early sect of believers called Gnostics.

Among other things,

Gnostics believe that there is a true creator God

and a false creator God

and that human nature mirrors this duality.

Gnostics also believe that the Savior does not really save anyone,
but rather comes only to teach.
For Gnostics, Jesus is not truly human – he only appears to be human.
And in the gospel of Judas,
Judas is the hero because he helps Jesus escape his human body.
And that is why, of course, that it is VERY important
that Luke's gospel tells us that the risen Jesus
ate a piece of baked fish!
Baked fish!
Not slippery sushi that might slight right through a ghost –
but fish that has been baked,
fish that has a little crustiness, maybe even a burnt edge.

This Jesus in Luke's gospel
is the God-man, the word-made-flesh, risen
and still among us in a body which can eat baked fish.
Remember what this morning's scripture:
"They were startled and terrified
and thought they were seeing a ghost.
Jesus said to them...
'Touch and see me,
because a ghost does not have flesh and bones
as you can see I have.'"

"Touch me and see me..."
If we fail to find Jesus in what we touch and see,
then we fail to find Jesus.
If we believe that Jesus is only a spirit –
then we might be little better than the Gnostics.

The special and peculiar nature of Catholicism
is its sacramentality, its "touch and see"
approach and understanding to faith.
At baptism we immerse babies and adults in fonts and pools of water –
touch and see!
At baptism and confirmation
we smear perfumed oil over heads and foreheads –
touch and see!
In the eucharist we take bread and wine
and eat and drink the body and blood of Christ,
consuming him and his life given for us –
touch and see!

This is why our faith pokes and prods its way into every nook and cranny
of our existence,
because every human part of me,
every human thought of my mind and imagination,
every human impulse and desire of my heart,
every thing I do, or fail to do,
is the stuff out of which I live -we live- our response to God in faith.

Baked fish is important

because we need to know that the risen Jesus ate,
and chewed, and swallowed food,
to show us clearly
that our bodies are good, that they are holy,
that in our bodies and hearts God dwells
and comes to life in our souls and in our flesh and bone.
We go to the table of eucharist now
to "touch and see" the Jesus who appeared to his friends
after he rose from the dead.
We go to consume the Risen One
who ate a piece of baked fish
to let us know we are one with him
in spirit and in his body and blood.
We are the Body of Christ
and we receive the Body of Christ.
Come, touch and see: Jesus is risen among us this morning.

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