

Jesus Is No Ghost

I can't imagine, I really don't want to imagine, how vulnerable and scared and alone people must have felt last Thursday night, while a 19-year-old gunman shot and killed 8 people, wounding others, at an Indianapolis FedEx facility. While our politicians and media want talk about gun control, I want to talk about Jesus.

Of course, people can talk about whatever they want to talk about, we are free to do so. Which means I am free to raise the question of Jesus. Where was the Lord while this took place? Some non-believers will say he is dead and buried, while some believers in Christ will say he is in heaven with Almighty God.

I say Jesus was there. He showed up amidst the chaos, fully risen to be with people. This means Jesus was no ghost. He was not a ghost in the sense of being a no show. Nor was he a ghost in the sense of being a scary apparition. Instead, Jesus was there as a comforting, consoling and caring presence for people.

If doubt this, then you're in good company. Even his disciples on the first Easter doubted Jesus was there with them. According to Luke 24, they had doubts in their hearts his resurrection was a real thing, and they were disbelieving he was alive and there with him. They instead thought they were seeing a ghost.

Therefore, Jesus showed them his hands and feet. At this point, it was no longer only about the disciples seeing nail holes, but to actually feel the bones in his hands and feet. Ghosts do not have bones. Then, as if to seal the deal, Jesus ate some of their broiled fish, because here again, ghosts don't eat anything.

Of course, even after that some disciples struggled to believe a crucified and dead Jesus could be alive, so the Lord talked with them about the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, and helped them to see how it made sense from the Word of God that he, the Christ, had to suffer, be crucified, and then rise on the third day.

It was not a simple process, but gradually, over time, the disciples, the Apostle Paul, and well over 500 other people, saw the Lord Jesus alive, risen from the dead, and believed his promise that even after he ascended to heaven, he would as it says in Matthew 28:20, be with us always, to the end of all time.

I believe this too, and I believe Jesus was no ghost last Thursday night in Indianapolis. As sin, evil and death, sadly and tragically used a 19-year-old, to bring terror, chaos and death to a FedEx workplace, the risen Jesus was there too, helping and saving everyone who survived, and yes, even those who died.

The same is true in your life, people of God. Jesus is no ghost in your life either. He is risen and present with you, standing at your side right now, not as a scary, threatening or judgmental presence, but as one who has come to comfort, console and calm you in your life, to help and save you no matter what you face.

Yes, indeed, Jesus is a loving and healing presence in this world and in your life, and he is calling you, to believe that he is risen and here with us, loving us and

loving people, because we are his children. We are his children, and we find our hope and love, forgiveness and salvation in his holy and awesome name.

Of course, there is an evil presence, a scary enemy, in the world, too. This is the evil which so sadly and tragically took over a young 19-year-old and had him do terrible things last Thursday. Yet, I proclaim to you that not only evil was there, but Jesus was there too. Jesus was there overcoming that evil.

So, I encourage you today, children of God, to read your Bibles and use your eyes of faith to see the Lord risen and present, and to never let evil gain advantage.

Evil wishes you to see its presence, while at the same to deny the presence of the risen Lord in this world and in your life. In this way, evil is a liar.

That means, whenever and wherever you see trouble in this world, whether that be in Indianapolis last Thursday, or whether that be closer to home, in your heart and life, or in the hearts and lives of people you care about, remember Jesus is right there too, seeking to overcome such evil, and to help and save people.

Yet, Jesus calls you to more than simply seeing that he alive and in the world.

Jesus calls you, his followers, to make his presence real. In other words, Jesus calls you to use your hands and feet to make his presence real in the lives of other people in this world, which is so often troubled by sin, evil and death.

We, who believe in Jesus, who see him alive in this world and in our lives, are called by the Lord to serve others, to love others, in such a way, that through our service and love, people see Jesus is not dead and gone, but risen and present in our lives, and through us, in their lives too. Through us, Jesus is no ghost.

In fact, it through us, through the church, that the world sees Jesus is no ghost, but instead Jesus shows up through us offering hope and love, forgiveness and salvation to everyone who needs such things, to everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord when they face sin, evil and death, or any trouble, in their lives.

In other words, we, the church, are not a scary presence in this world. We leave that to evil. We do not scare or threaten or judge people, we leave that to evil.

Instead, we, the believers in Christ, the church, take hurting and struggling people by the hand, and lead them through any evil and every hard time they face.

This means, we stand with people, just as the Lord Jesus stood by his disciples in the days following his resurrection. We stand with people, offering them the peace of God, offering them the good news that they are not alone in the world to face sin, evil and death, because the risen Jesus is with them, and so are we.

So, like Jesus, we, the church, the people of God, are not ghosts either. We show up in people lives to serve them and love them with our hands and feet. We are, in fact, the body of Christ in the world today, risen and active, and ready to serve and love, care for and heal, feed and shelter, a hungry and hurting world.

I invite you, followers of the risen Lord Jesus, to reflect on how you might make the presence of the Lord real in for those people in your life. How might you make the presence of the risen Lord Jesus real in the life of people you work with, or maybe your neighbors, or perhaps beyond your neighborhood and in our community.

Indeed, who might we serve, love, feed, shelter, or help in the days ahead? These are people who face sin, evil and death, and the Lord us calling us to bring his risen presence and love to them. He is not asking us to save the world, he already did that. But he does ask us to bring his presence and love to a few.

Sadly, sin, evil and death will continue to show its scary presence in the world. Last Thursday in Indianapolis is not the last time. But we are not alone to face such things. The risen Lord stands with us. Jesus and us, his church, are not ghosts. Together, we show up to stand against such evil, and will defeat it with love.

Amen.