
Zoom Meetings and Ghosts

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According to Luke's gospel, when Jesus appeared to his disciples, just after the resurrection, they thought he was a ghost (Luke 24:37). I think they could have just as easily thought it was a Zoom meeting.

I acknowledge that Zoom meetings (or Teams meetings, or virtual meetings, or whatever) can be better than nothing. But they are definitely worse, far worse, than embodiment. I think of ghosts when I am staring at Zoom screens. Is that person really there? What is that weird, murky, image behind that person? Why is their screen turned off?

My frequent joke is that Zoom meetings are our modern, technological equivalents of séances. "Are you there?" "We can hear you, but we can't see you." "We can see you, but we can't hear you." "Why do you keep going in and out of focus?" The séance is supposed to grant us important information, but it rarely does; it is stuff we could have looked up, or remembered, on our own.

The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost, because they were not convinced he was with them, in the flesh. Their sensibility changed only when, a few moments later, Jesus asked, "Do you have anything here to eat?" (Luke 24:41). "Touch me," said Jesus, "and see." (or, as The Who would sing 1,930 years later, "See me, feel me, touch me, heal me.")

That's what I want to ask when I am on a Zoom meeting: "Do you have anything here to eat?" Is there any way I can grow in community in this meeting? Usually, the people who feel they have accomplished something in a Zoom meeting are the people who have done the talking. Thus, my experience is that executives and preachers and authoritarians like Zoom the most: they get to talk at people, and then they think they have accomplished something.

I sense that Zoom meetings are the latest development in that way of thinking that claims, "I am spiritual, but I am not religious." For, "religion" means "re-ligio," to tie back together, as ligaments tie bodies together. Zoom meetings, on the other hand, are for realities that have no body. They have no flesh. They produce little community. We need spirituality, AND we need religion. Good spirituality needs good religion!

Of course, yes, I have benefitted from Zoom meetings! But usually it was because a sense of community pre-existed the virtual meeting; we were building on relationship that we already knew.

Jesus needs embodiment to be real. And we, the Body of Christ need embodiment to be real. We need religion; we need to be tied back together. And, of course, we need to be the Body of Christ out in the world, feeding the world, touching the world, sensing the world, healing the world. Healing requires touch and time. We need to be there in person.

This is why the risen Christ does not appear in a weird, out-of-body, séance. The risen Christ is not a ghost. The risen Christ wants something to eat. The risen Christ appears in the flesh. The risen Christ appears in us, the people of God, who engage each other, who touch each other, who laugh and sing together! The risen Christ appears in bodies, real people. Do you have anything to eat? Let us keep the feast!



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