

Fearing Jesus

Luke 24:36b-48

INTRO:

They say that the opposite of faith is not **doubt**, it is **fear**. This is why it so interesting that the disciples respond to the confirmation of their faith with **fear**. **What is the relationship between fear and faith? How can faith help us to strengthen our nerves against the things that frighten us? How can faith give us the boldness to be the witnesses Jesus calls us to be in this text?**

ME:

Fear sometimes causes me not to trust God as fully as I should. Trust and faith are synonyms. There are times when life seems to scare all the trust and faith out of me that I can muster.

YOU:

Do you ever feel like that? You move along through life and . . . *BAM! You smash into a wall!* Life comes rushing in and you are drowning. If you ever feel like this too, let's see if Jesus can help us get back to the business of faith and trust:

GOD:

Luke 24:36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 37 They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he 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 of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

WE:

We read that while they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them. **What was it they were talking about?** They're were talking about how Jesus was revealed to them in the breaking of the bread on

their walk to the village of Emmaus. Jesus said, **“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them,”** and Jesus showed them the truth of that promise. We should expect the presence of Christ when we are in *curious* and *deep* conversation about him.

Did you notice the first words Jesus said to them? It was **“Peace be with you.”** These were perfect words, since they were scared, thinking they saw a ghost. *Peace* on earth was the message from the angels to the shepherds. *Peace* was the word spoken by the angel when meeting with Elizabeth and Mary. When Jesus prepared these same disciples for his departure, he said, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”** *Peace* is a wonderful word when spoken into the spirit of God’s children when their lives are *full of fear*.

Even though they had experienced the reality of the resurrection, Jesus knew their hearts.

He said, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?”

Is there room for doubt in our lives of faith? There will be questions with which we struggle for answers. We read in verse 41 that even after seeing the proof, the disciples still did not believe it because of joy and amazement.

There is a mystery that accompanies things that seem too good to be true.

Maybe the joy and amazement should overwhelm us and be something we accept by faith even if we wonder how it can be so. There is a **doubt** born out of *skepticism*, but there also is a **doubt** and a *stuttering hesitancy* born out of *wonder* and *amazement*.

Jesus scolded them for their doubts but immediately tried to eliminate them. He said to them, “**Look at my hands and my feet. It is me! Touch me and see.**” **What does it take to prove something?** Some say that seeing is believing, but proof isn’t always found because of the *seeing*. Sometimes it is in the *touching*, so Jesus offered his physical body as evidence of his physical resurrection. “**Look at my hands and feet.**” Perhaps the invitation for them to prove he was not a ghost by *touching* him also included the invitation to *see* the wounds on his hands and feet that would positively identify him. Christ engaged their senses to help them see the truth.

This should encourage us!

God uses our senses, our reason, and our experience to validate truth.

What was the resurrected body of Jesus like? He was there trying to convince the disciples that he was flesh and bones, while at the same time he was able to appear and disappear and to pass through walls. Jesus had a physical body capable of eating, of being recognized, and of being

touched, yet there was an added *spiritual* dimension to his body that made him different from what he had been. Paul wrote that at our resurrection we will be given a body like that of Jesus' resurrected body in 1 Corinthians 15. Jesus was alive and “**human**,” he accepted a piece of broiled fish ... *and ate it right there in front of them.*

There seems to be a lapse in time between verse 43 and verse 44. We know that Jesus spent forty days with the disciples between the *resurrection* and the *ascension*. They would have been wondering every time they were together as a group. **Would Jesus show up again this time?** It is this kind of **anticipation** and **expectation** that we should nurture whenever we gather together as a Church.

During one of these times, Jesus came to them and said, “**Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**” *That's the Hebrew Bible!* The Law is the first five books, along with the major and minor prophets, and the Psalms, or Writings. All of the Hebrew Bible spoke of the of God's Anointed One, the Messiah.

Not only did Jesus explain Scripture to them in verse 45, he opened their minds so they could understand it. He gave them discerning minds so they could more easily understand the meaning of Scripture when they read it. It

is a wonderful gift when God stimulates the mind so that **understanding** and **application** accompany the reading of his Word.

The Holy Spirit opens our minds and helps us understand. The founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, said, “**Scripture can only be understood through the same Spirit whereby it was given.**” The Spirit who inspired Scripture interprets it to the *curious* and *seeking* mind. As we read we should ask God to help us understand it and see its application to our lives.

In Verses 46 and 47, Jesus told them, “**This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**” The Atonement was necessary for God to *forgive* and *justify* sinful humanity. Now that the sacrifice had been paid, the way to justification was to be preached. The essentials of the gospel message are *repentance* and *forgiveness of sins*. Peter shows in Acts 5:31 that repentance and the forgiveness of sins was the message of the early church. Salvation is discovered as someone responds to the gift of grace from God. Salvation involves **repentance** on the part of those seeking it and **forgiveness** of sins by God who is offering it. It is called **synergism** — God and humankind responding together to make salvation a reality.

Gospel preaching is the offer of forgiveness of sins and a call to repentance.

The preaching of the gospel was to begin in Jerusalem. The very site of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

Then it was to ripple out to all nations. Salvation is offered to all people, regardless of status, nationality, or degree of their sinfulness. Luke wrote to a Greek audience, so he made the point that salvation is *inclusive*—offered to Gentiles as well as to Jews. Throughout his gospel, Luke emphasized the universal appeal and availability of the good news, beginning with the angel's pronouncement that it was for all people and finishing with the preaching assignment to the disciples. The good news is open to the whole world and is for all people in every age.

There may be several expectations that God has for the church, including being a place of worship, nurture, fellowship, evangelism, and service. To his disciples, Jesus said, “**You are witnesses of these things.**”

We are not the Church if we are not his witnesses. He commissions us to simply tell the story of who he is and what he has done in our lives.

Surely, since Jesus had opened their eyes and understanding, they could now know what he told them before his crucifixion. He had told them that it was essential that he go away, but that he would send the Holy Spirit to be

with them in his absence. So they must have expected his departure was soon going to be permanent. And then it happened. Jesus told them:

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised” (24:49).

They knew that what the Father had promised could not happen without Jesus leaving them. He then instructed them, **“Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”** It would have been understandable if in their zeal to be witnesses to what they had experienced, they had burst out of their room and out of Jerusalem, to act on the commission Jesus had given them. But they still needed what only the Holy Spirit could give them. Their **“impossible”** task could not be accomplished by human effort alone. But only with the God with whom all things are possible.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

We must let faith overpower our fear so we can witness to the world what Jesus has done and is doing.

YOU:

Too often we want to wait for further instruction when we should get going. But it is just as bad for us to go when we should be waiting for God’s *timing*, *direction*, and *empowerment*. Spiritual maturity is seen in our ability to

know when to get going and when to wait. Only as we are willing to do either can God equip and use us.

CLOSE:

According to a legend, when Jesus returned to heaven following his death on the cross and his resurrection from the tomb, the angels gathered in amazement. They gazed at the wounds in his hands and feet, and shuddered to recall his suffering. Finally Gabriel spoke. **“Master, You suffered terribly down there. Do they know and appreciate the extent of your sacrifice?”**

“No,” said Jesus. **“Not yet. Right now only a handful of people in Palestine know.”**

“Then what have you done to let everyone else know?” asked Gabriel.

“I’ve asked Peter, James, and John, and a few others to spread the news. They will tell others who will tell others until the message spreads to the ends of the earth.”

But Gabriel, knowing the nature of human beings, asked, **“What is Plan B?”**

“I have no Plan B,” replied Christ. **“There is no alternative strategy. I’m counting on them.”**

2,000 years later, he still has no other plan. He's counting on you and me.

If God wants you to wait, the time spent waiting is not wasted time. Enthusiasm, motivation, and ambition are wonderful things, but not when they create shortcuts around spiritual preparation and endowment with the Spirit's power. Power from on high is greater power than the power of personality, position, or persuasion.

Let's pray for some spiritual maturity in our lives of faith...