

## “Touch and See”

### *Living the Resurrection – part #3*

*Luke 24:36-48*

[1] *Welcome, prayer*

[2] Have you ever heard a really good motivational speaker? Has someone ever spoken so forcefully, you felt like you could run through a wall? When I was in college, our Director of Bands, John Paynter, spoke to us on New Year’s Eve, right before we marched in the Parade of Roses and the Rose Bowl game in Pasadena, California. I will never forget his words. “Don’t settle on your laurels. Go out there like no one has ever seen you before. Give a little extra kick, a little extra air.” New Year’s Day, 1996, will go down in my mind as one of the best experiences of my life, largely due to the motivational leadership of the band.

[3] Throughout history there have been many great speeches that have stirred the hearts of the masses. For example, “Four score and seven years ago.” “I have a dream.” “Remember the Alamo!” “Win one for the Gipper!” Let me ask, what speeches have changed your life? *[Pause for answers.]*

Of course, our mindset can greatly affect our response to a speaker. Sure, college marching bands before a football game are motivated to do their best. But how motivated are you after seeing someone die? If you’ve just come from the funeral of your best friend, I’m guessing you’ll need an above-average speaker to get you going again.

[4] Since Easter we have been talking about “Living the Resurrection.” Last week, we discussed Thomas’s reluctance to believe that Jesus had risen. We learned that everyone has a choice to “Believe it or not.”

[5] Today I want to focus our attention on the rest of the disciples in the upper room. These grieving men were the epitome of “unmotivated.” In fact, John’s gospel tells us they were “locked in for fear.” (John 20:19) A better way to say it is they were locked in by their fear. They had witnessed the crucifixion. They knew they might be next. They had no desire to do anything for anyone. They just wanted to hide.

[6] It is during their anxious state that Jesus suddenly appeared with his motivation speech. He said, “Peace be with you...Why are you troubled, and why

do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

The irony was unmistakable. Why were the disciples startled? Because for all they knew, Jesus was dead. Talk about a shock! They must have been gasping for air, trying not to faint. Maybe they were full of adrenaline, but the only thing they might have been motivated to do is run for their lives.

[7] This scene of fright has played out before in the Bible. Remember Jesus walked on the water? While the disciples huddled in the boat during a fierce storm, they saw him strolling on the sea. What was their response? “...They were terrified. ‘It’s a ghost!’ they said, and cried out in fear.” (Matthew 14:26) Then Jesus inspired them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” (v.27)

[8] Or remember when Peter, James and John went up the mountain with Jesus? Moses and Elijah appeared, a bright cloud enveloped them, and God’s voice spoke to them. Their response? “When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.” (Matthew 17:6) Again, Jesus gave them a short pep-talk. “‘Get up,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid.’” (v.7)

It’s like one of the prerequisites for being a disciple is you have to be weak-kneed!

[9] Now, fear can make us captives, especially fear of the unknown. What future did the disciples have without their leader? What hope did they possibly have if Jesus was dead? None. So having Jesus suddenly appear was not only shocking, it was also confusing.

Jesus had more to say to them, but first he had to reassure them. He asked for something to eat. There’s a motivational speech I can get behind. The best words ever are, “Dinner’s ready!” That really gets our household running!

[10] There is something about eating a meal together that can calm our fears and restore our senses. When the disciples ate with Jesus, they were reconnected to him again. They remembered the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. (Luke 9.) They remembered the parable of the wedding feast. (Luke 14). They remembered sharing the Passover meal together, when Jesus said, “This is my body, broken for you.” (Luke 22:19)

[11] As they ate, wondering, amazed, and finally reassured, Jesus once more began to teach them. Luke says Jesus opened up their minds to the scriptures. (24:45) He said, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.... The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (v.44-48)

Think about that last statement for a moment: “You are witnesses!” What is Jesus asking them to do? Clearly, they were to go and tell the world about his life, death and resurrection. They were to teach the gospel, the way of salvation, the way to be forgiven, free, and restored to a loving relationship with God Almighty. They had a testimony to give, and a world waiting to hear it.

History tells us that Jesus’ motivational speech worked. The disciples did become witnesses, in a big way, even to the point where most of them died for their faith in Christ.

[12] Because of the Resurrection, the disciples went from hiding, scared and unmotivated, to openly declaring that Jesus was Lord and traveling through the known world to share the good news. I can think of many great speeches throughout history, but none has had a greater impact than this one by Christ.

[13] “Touch and see...You are my witnesses.” What things do we touch and taste to see if they are real? Have you ever bitten into a wax fruit, thinking it was real? Ever picked up a rock that you thought was a bit of chocolate? Discerning the difference between real and fake is a crucial skill in life. It is also a crucial piece of our faith.

Think about something crazy you have experienced. What story do you have that no one would believe? When do you say, “Trust me; I was there”? When something amazing has happened to you, you won’t let anyone else stop you from proclaiming it to the world.

[14] That’s what Jesus asks of us today. We need to proclaim our experiences with him. We need to testify that our faith is grounded in reality of the Resurrection. The world is looking at us, asking, “What difference does your

faith in Christ make?” We must ask ourselves, “What can we provide, what hands-on proof can we give that Jesus is alive among us?”<sup>1</sup>

The disciples were shocked and scared, but Jesus fed their souls with the truth. As a result, they took that truth to the world and became his witnesses.

That is now our legacy to continue. We are witnesses. You know what a witness does? A witness gives their testimony. A witness speaks the truth. A witness acts on the information they have received.

[15] I have to say, I think the best motivational speech from Jesus is this: “Can I have something to eat?” Look what happened. The disciples fed Jesus. According to Matthew 25:35, Jesus is asking all of us for something to eat. We are commanded to literally feed the hungry, like when we provide meals for Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly at Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, and figuratively feed a world that is hungry for truth, for peace, for hope.

For that same reason, I am serious about continuing our legacy of donating to the Salvation Army. I fear it is one of those things we have neglected as our church has gone into hiding a little during the pandemic. Our opportunity to feed our community is literally right at our front door.

[16] Psalm 34:8 says to taste and see that the Lord is good. Have you done that? I know I have. Throughout my life, I have seen the Holy Spirit moving, reconciling, healing, and changing lives on mission trips, at summer camp, during worship and singing, when I feel heaven is so close I could reach out and touch it. I cannot count the number of testimonies I’ve heard of God moving in surprising ways. I have lost count of prayers answered and miracles provided. I have been profoundly changed by the witness of faithful Christians who love and serve as Jesus taught them. I have been blown away by the lives of saints who minister to others with no thought of personal gain.

[17] Touch and See. You also are his witnesses. Sometimes another writer says it better than me, so let me share this quote from [umcdiscipleship.org](http://umcdiscipleship.org)

The gospel, the life of faith has to be grounded in reality. That’s why Jesus dwelled on this moment. That’s why we can take a breath at this point before we launch into a life of going to the ends of the earth to tell the

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<sup>1</sup> [Umcdiscipleship.org](http://umcdiscipleship.org)

story. If we don't start here, if we don't watch that piece of fish being eaten, if we don't grab hold, we won't see. And if we don't see, then we are likely to turn our message into one of the hereafter, the sweet by and by and not the here and now. We're liable to think that all the Resurrected One cares about is getting souls into some spiritualized heaven somewhere else, instead of feeding those who are hungry for breakfast right here in our own neighborhoods. We're liable to think that injustice here doesn't matter because it will all be sorted out one day instead of advocating for the oppressed and working for justice in our own communities. “Take hold of me and see” is about wanting to live in the world that he lived in and bring hope to our reality every day.

[18] You and I know people in our world are hungry for truth, motivation, hope and courage. Last week was full of awful news. It seems like the world is falling apart around us. Too many people are giving into their fears: fear of the other; fear of losing their false sense of security. Too many people hide behind locked doors, refusing to help their neighbors. We all fear that if we get too close to someone, we might be hurt.

We are his witnesses. We are the Body of Christ. God calls us to step out. Go and have a meal with someone. Better yet, make a meal for someone. Let's arm ourselves, not with guns, tear gas, or lawyers, but instead with fish and loaves, prayers and donations, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. Let's make disciples who are serious about changing the world, not clinging to our past.

[19] Jesus didn't rise from the dead to leave us with a good story. He didn't rise from the dead to give us something to do for an hour on Sunday morning. He didn't rise from the dead so we could spend the majority of our lives locked away in our homes and in our hearts, nursing our grief, licking our wounds. Jesus rose from the dead to prove his love for us is real. Jesus rose again to prove he is the only answer to our sin, as individuals, as a community, as a nation, as a world. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world.” Do you live in the world? Then Jesus was sent for you. Are your neighbors in the world? Then Jesus came for them. Is your boss, teacher, professor, coworker, postmaster, yoga instructor, waiter, hostess, or cook in the world? Jesus came for all of them, too.

"Peace!" "Touch and see!" Come and get it! Jesus has made us his witnesses. So let's get out and show the world who he really is.

Let us pray.

Memory verse: 1 John 3:1

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are...."

Reflection Questions:

1. What motivational speeches have impacted you?
2. How do you think the disciples were feeling just before Jesus appeared to them?
3. How do you think they felt immediately after his appearance?
4. How has the witness of the disciples affected the Christian faith today?
5. Whom in your life needs to hear the good news of the gospel? Pray that God makes you a faithful witness to them.