

## Luke 24:36b-48

Startled. Terrified. Frightened. Doubting. Joyful. Disbelieving. Wondering.

Every gospel account of Jesus' resurrection is slightly different, but all include one theme. No one believed it! The disciples – the ones who supported him and spent time with him, started the trend! They are the first to report disbelief.

Not surprising, really, when you think about it, because what happened defies rational thought. Dead people don't just get up and walk out of their tombs; we're *sure* about that. So when someone insists that a dead person has actually been raised – well, it upsets the natural order and so we either need to not believe it, or we risk causing losing confidence in pretty much everything we thought we could count on.

The disciples had even been forewarned. They'd heard earlier in the day from the women who had seen the empty tomb. Luke tells us that the disciples dismissed outright the testimony of the women who had been to the empty tomb. "These words seemed to them an idle tale," says Luke, "and they did not believe them" (24:11). Actually, "idle tale" is a polite translation. The Greek word that Luke uses – *leros* – is the root of our word *delirious*. When the disciples heard the women's report they considered it *crazy*; they thought these women were *out of their minds!*

Even with the foreshadowing of the women, the disciples, standing with Jesus, were struggling to believe.

So, let me just say it: *It's okay if you have doubts.*

Doubt is not the opposite of faith.

If fact, it is a necessary part of faith because faith, by definition, implies trusting even when it is impossible to *prove* whatever it is we are putting our trust in. We exercise this kind of faith every day, in countless ways. We trust that the lights will come on when we flip the switch, even though we can't be absolutely certain they will. We trust that the sun will rise, that the winds will eventually stop, that spring will turn to summer.

Faith asks us to trust even when we cannot prove that in which we are putting our trust. The mystery of the resurrection is beyond our ability to comprehend it. It lies outside the realm of our experience and defies reason. It makes no sense. We shouldn't be shocked that people find it hard to accept. We need not be dismayed if they, or we, harbor doubts. Faith can accommodate doubt. Faith is about trusting, even when we lack the certainty of scientific proof.

The disciples are doubting, wondering, questioning even as they are watching Jesus eat fish (a not so subtle move by Jesus - ghosts don't eat fish is the lesson), and at some point they begin to believe. I don't know when or how or what the catalyst was for each of them, but they transformed from a frightened little band hiding behind locked doors and trembling with fear to fearless witnesses, boldly proclaiming their conviction that he is RISEN and that their lives have been forever changed.

They testify to this without a shred of fear, refusing to withdraw their words even when persecuted and put to death. *Something – someone – transformed them, sweeping away their doubts and filling them with power and conviction and joy!* Their lives are charged with new meaning and purpose. They see what God is doing and they recognize that they are called to participate with God. Somehow they realize that they are meant to be channels of God's grace and power to others, bringing LIFE and HOPE into a defeated world.

So when we doubt, that's okay. Our faith, and our God, can handle that. And when we are transformed, accept the gift. When the light goes on for you, when something clicks, when not believing doesn't

work anymore – then give in. Give in to the transformation, the new message, the new identity that we have in Christ. Be the child of God we are called to be! Witness to the doubt and the faith!

The world needs witnesses because there are times when the world seems very dark, and when evil seems to be winning out. There are days when we ourselves are tempted to doubt and to despair, when we too are in need of this witness – which is why we need each other, just as the early Christians needed each other, to keep before us and within us the hope, and the faith that God will win out.

Take courage today, and do not be afraid. When you doubt, allow yourself to be okay with it, because faith will come. And when the faith comes, embrace it, and spread the good news.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!