

“In peace, we will lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O Lord, make us rest secure.”
AMEN!

There’s an old commercial where
a young girl and her father are
watching the sunset behind a mountain.

As the sun is about to vanish,
the daddy says, “Going, going, gone.”

And on the “gone” the sun moves out of sight.

The child snuggles up to dad and said,
“Do it again, daddy.” :-)

In the wake of the eclipse last week, we can relate.

“Do it again, God!”

Today, beloved of God,
we get to do it, again.

Not the eclipse, but Luke tells us the story,
one more time.

On Easter, two weeks ago, it was Mark’s
telling of the resurrection and then

last week was John's turn.

John wrote of the evening of the first Easter,
and then a week later when Thomas was present.

Now, it's Luke's turn to tell about
what occurred that first Easter evening.

In other words, Mark, John and Luke
crash together with their gospel proclamations
and the word of God is reported to us
in slightly different ways. (Pause)

Like other gospels, Luke was intent to report
that it was Jesus who appeared to
the disciples and announced
"Peace be with you."

That part's pretty similar.

And after Jesus said those words,
the disciples were startled and terrified
thinking they were seeing a ghost.

So, Jesus offered his scars and allowed them
to touch them to prove that he wasn't a specter.

The mood changed a bit.

We are told they were experiencing joy, now,
but there was still some “wondering and disbelief.”

Could they trust their eyes and hands?

Was it all *really* happening?

These specifics are all unique to Luke’s report.

We might gather that his audience was
wondering if Jesus simply appeared in a vision,
and was outside of reality.

So there are these clear words from Jesus in response,
“touch me and see, ghosts don’t have flesh
and bones as you and I have,” Jesus said.

But that, even, wasn’t enough proof
so he asked for something to eat.

Signaling that, since ghosts don’t eat,
he cannot be one.

The gospel said, “He took fish and ate it
in their presence.” (Pause)

We “do it all again,” this morning because
we too have questions, doubts, disbeliefs.

We want our proof, too. (Mmm)

Let's change the question about proof, shall we?

Instead of asking for signs and for proof,
let's begin to name the moments of our lives
when we experienced a connection
to the divine or a filling of
the Spirit of God within.

When we begin to name those moments,
write them down (if necessary) then we may
find that in those experiences

there are nuggets of proof that were given to us...
still are given to us.

How have they come to you?

Sometimes in the opening up of scriptures, but
many more times, it is
in the miracles of life and miracles of death.

That's right, I said "death."

You have been witnesses to things like death,
heartbreaking things, things that can't be
undone and yet, here you are.

That's quite miraculous!

We are together to signify that you are
a part of a community of faith.

A place that chooses to not live on in perpetual fear.

In a place where we
"open up the scriptures."

Not to beat others, or ourselves,
over the head with them, but to recognize
the ways we are a part of something big.

"You are witnesses to these things," Jesus said.

Let that be all the proof of the
resurrection, we need.
(Pause)

The disciples were witnesses to
God's presence in miracle form.

We are too.

Witnesses to unity and the power of prayer
and the embracing of open minds.

Witnesses to hear new things in familiar texts

and experiencing the embodied
Jesus in our midst.

“You are witnesses to these things.” (Pause)

Because when it is all said and done
the real question for us is not whether
this gospel or that gospel is truer...

the real question is
what is our response to the resurrection?

Will it be that we continue to live in fear, or
get bogged down in our feelings of scarcity?

If we live in fear or always worry about
what we don't have, how will our minds
be opened to have encounters of courage
and abundance flow upon us?

There are forces that will name everything
wrong in the world, and there's a lot
that needs fixing, no doubt.

But, there is a lot of good things going on, too.

I believe we need to give the good things
more of our attention.

To be witnesses to them and tell about being
a part of a community that bears witness
to an embodied Jesus that is still with us.

To tell the story one more time.(Pause)

We can't go back in time, but we can
tell people of God's love and be honest about
the ways churches have hurt people.

We can be truthful and name the ways
Christianity has taken a negative position and,

in the eyes of a lot of people in the United States,
become a part of our division problem.

We can see and understand that and proclaim
that it's different at St. Stephen.

In fact, it's different at a lot of places of worship
who stand for peace, sacrificial love, and
care for the neighbor and the stranger.

Places that practice repentance and forgiveness.

We can't "fix" the others, but we can nurture
our attention to remain upon Jesus and
not lose our belief in the resurrection of
the dead.

Mysterious? Yes.

Impossible? No. (Pause)

Because we know when our hearts burn, right?

A few people came up to me last week and noted how they felt something like a burning heart when we ask Jesus to touch our scars.

Having a burning heart is an unofficial theme of Luke and Acts.

Remember the road to Emmaus?

The couple of disciples recognized the way their hearts burned within them when they walked with Jesus, though not recognizing him.

It was later, we they spoke to each other about the event with the stranger when they recognized the way

their hearts burned when he opened the scriptures to them?

They didn't recognize Jesus

until he broke the bread.

Something happens when we break off
a piece of bread and give it to another person.

The something is... Jesus is revealed... and he does it
again and again and again.

AMEN!