

# Sermon for Easter 3B

## The Text: Luke 24:36-48

There's a saying that I'm sure most of you have heard. "It's too good to be true." It's the kind of thing you say when you've been told something from someone you normally trust, but because the news is so good, you struggle to believe it is true. Examples might include: the news of your house selling for \$100,000 over the expected price; or getting an A on an exam that you expected to fail; or going to the doctor, expecting the worst, only to find out you are fit and healthy. They say in business that if something seems too good to be true, then it probably is and you should walk away.

Well, in today's reading the disciples have just one of those "too good to be true moments." The two people who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus have rushed back to Jerusalem. Full of excitement they find the disciples and can't wait to tell them they have seen the Lord, risen from the dead! And He has just blown their minds by showing them how He fulfilled all the Old Testament scriptures.

Just as they were explaining what had happened, the man Himself arrives. Jesus stands in the middle of them and says "Peace be with you!" Luke's account tells us again what we have heard in these past few weeks – that despite the good news that their friend is alive, the disciples can hardly believe their eyes. In fact, their first reaction to Jesus is one of fear. So He does what He has done before. He shows that He is flesh and blood – not a ghost, not some spiritual apparition, but a real live person, complete with scars in His hands and feet. So real in fact, that He even eats a piece of fish!

And as we have come to expect, the disciples' reaction is most unusual. Luke puts it this way: "and they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement." In other words, they saw Jesus with their eyes, but thought that the possibility of Him being risen from the dead was 'too good to be true.'

The word that is actually used to describe the disciples' reaction to Jesus is the word 'unbelief'. Now that seems a strange word to be using when the Lord is risen from the dead and standing right in front of them, and yet that's what God's word says. Despite the joy and marvel and excitement, the disciples still had unbelief. This is where it's important to talk about what exactly they had trouble believing. Of course it was hard for them to believe the guy they just watched get crucified and buried on Friday was now standing before them, alive and well, on Sunday evening.

But...there's more to it than this. Remember: The women at the tomb had already encountered Jesus earlier that morning. Peter and John had already been out to the empty tomb and found a neatly folded facecloth in the tomb. There were also the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who had actually walked and talked and broke bread with the risen Christ.

It's not so much that they couldn't believe that a dead man was now alive. After all, they had seen Jesus perform that miracle a couple of times before with their own eyes. But this was no normal man. This was the One they had put their hopes in. The One they had hoped would restore the Kingdom of Israel to its former glory. The One they had fought over as they sought to secure the positions of power and honour at His right and left hands. And they had seen Him die only a few days earlier, and along with Him, their dreams had died. It was just too good to be true to think that He was back...that their dreams might still come to fruition.

They were overjoyed and overwhelmed with the fact that the crucified Christ was now standing in their midst alive and well. But what they didn't understand was what this meant. They didn't understand the fact that Christ's life, death, and resurrection actually meant complete forgiveness of all sin. It meant reconciliation with their heavenly Father. It meant eternal life in heaven. This is precisely why our Lord opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Despite the fact that they knew what the Scriptures said, they didn't know what they meant. "The Christ will suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. And repentance and forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in His name to all nations." This is what they didn't get. This is where their unbelief came into play. This is why Christ opened their minds to these realities, giving to them the life-giving gift of faith and understanding through His Word.

But this isn't just a history lesson. This is our story too. We're no different than the disciples. If we will be honest: There's not one of us here who

doesn't still struggle with doubts and troubles and even unbelief. Now, some of you might very well protest against that, but let's call it what it is. We all struggle with the belief that God is truly with us always...even in the bad times. We all struggle with trusting and believing God when He calls the very things we so often say, think, and do "sin." We struggle to trust Him in a way that we give up what we want so as to embrace with joy the life He calls us to. Like the disciples we are overjoyed that Jesus is risen from the dead but we hold on to a life that is shaped by our own desires rather than surrendering to the risen Lord in every way.

"But you don't understand" some people say. "'It's not gossip or slander'", they protest. "It's simply sharing important information with others". It's not adultery that happens to be outside the bonds of marriage the way God intended", they say. "It's a loving relationship". "It's not despising God's Word and profaning the Sabbath", they claim. It's simply exercising my freedom to not have to go to church all time."

Does this ring any bells for you? Maybe it's these sins and maybe it's others. But if it does ring a bell then hear the end of Jesus' sermon in this text and repent! Turn to Christ alone, who suffered, died, and rose again from the dead. Turn and receive the forgiveness of sins that was paid for in full for us with the life blood of Christ Jesus. Turn and walk in the light and life that is found only in Jesus Christ—our God and Lord.

In order to do that we must hear the ultimate 'too good to be true' statement – the good news that even though we didn't deserve, that even though our life is still not perfect, our sins are forgiven because Jesus died in our place. Our life is restored to its rightful place in our Heavenly Father's kingdom because Jesus rose in victory; and eternity itself is open to us because Jesus – our Lord – is the way and the truth and the life.

Yes, the disciples found it hard to believe what they saw with their eyes and heard with their ears. But Jesus opened the Scriptures to them so that together with us here, they could understand the joy His resurrection offers to us all. They discovered what we too can know. That the answer to our doubts, to our struggles to live a God pleasing life, to our worries and anxieties is found as we hear this same 'too good to be true' word which declares us at peace with God and forgiven in Jesus' name. May we treasure this word and rejoice in its saving message all our days. Amen.