

## *We are Witnesses*

Luke 24: 36b-48 (April 18, 2021)

### ***Luke 24: 36b-48***

<sup>36</sup>While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” <sup>37</sup>They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup>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.” <sup>40</sup>And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup>While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate in their presence. <sup>44</sup>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.” <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>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, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.

### ***Historical Context***

The risen Jesus appears and just as suddenly disappears. We are not in the realm of a literal understanding of resurrection which would have Jesus brought back to life (like Lazarus) and living a normal life. Luke invites us to imagine something more mysterious: a materializing and dematerializing risen Jesus who makes appearances and then vanishes. This was consistent with how the early traditions understood Jesus’ resurrection. It is the same person, embodied, but now transformed or transfigured into a new way of being and being embodied. Paul speaks of it in 1 Corinthians 15 as being a spiritual body.

### ***Theme: We Are Witnesses***

Notice, Jesus’ address to the disciples is not, “you *will* be witnesses. Not, “please be witnesses.” Not, “consider being witnesses if you have time.” No, “you are witnesses of these things.” We are witnesses. As it turns out, witnessing is not voluntary, but a state of being. How often we forget that our words and deeds, or lack thereof, are indeed giving witness to how we imagine God to be. We might want to consider just what those words and deeds are saying about God.

That’s the rub. “We are witnesses” is not only who we are but also how others see God to be. “We are witnesses” both points to our calling as well as our commitment to it. “We are witnesses” gives witness to our own selves, our own faith, our own belief. And that is the hardest truth to hear — that perhaps we don’t believe in the identity God has given us, don’t believe God needs it, don’t believe others will see it, don’t believe that it actually matters. All the while, therefore, disavowing God’s relentless attempts to expand our imaginations.

“We are witnesses” does not depend on our acceptance or agreement or approval. “We are witnesses” does not depend on our readiness or recognition or responsiveness. “We are witnesses” just is. Because witnessing is not optional. It’s a way of life. It’s who you are.