

4/15/18 Third Sunday of Easter

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

*In this account of an appearance after his resurrection, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand him as Messiah. Jesus convinces them that he has been raised and sends them on a mission to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness.*

<sup>36b</sup>Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] 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."

Last Sunday, the sermon started out by listing some famous lines from some famous movies. Another one that was not mentioned is: “Show me the money!” That is now a famous line uttered from a football character played by Cuba Gooding Jr, when he was weighing whether to stick with his sports agent, played by Tom Cruise, in the movie Jerry Maguire. It is a phrase that has been ranked 25 on the all-time greatest movie quotes. It still is often used today. Not just in sports, but anytime, someone is looking for the proof in their pudding. However, it is undoubtedly still used around a player and the negotiations of a salary with a sports team.

Will the player sign? Will they offer him more money? Will he show up to play? Will he skip the preseason and training camp once again? Well, it is officially the offseason for the National Football League and I am almost over the playoff game choke by the Pittsburgh Steelers, and though its only April, every day I am reading the latest news on the NFL and the team’s offseason move. This year, the big question for the team is will they re-sign their star running back, Le’Veon Bell? They placed the franchise tag on him, and now the question becomes can they sign him to a long-term contract. Like last year, he has the right to skip all the preseason training due to his contract situation. The question becomes do you place so much money on one player and then perhaps compromise the rest of the team? Is he worth it? Is he the real deal for years to come? Whether one agrees with his demands or not -he is saying: “Show me the money!”

Questions like these are not just centered around one player, it is for all the owners of all the teams. So, while a player’s demand might be show me the money – a football team’s demand is “Show me the talent.” “Show me

the production.” “Show me the commitment to the team.” Will a player’s talent in college translate to success on the field as a professional? The coaches, owners, and scouts for each team all go to the combine, they go to the university work out days, and they are allowed to bring 30 perspective players into their own city, their own headquarters, for an up close and personal look. Each team wants to see, they want to experience first-hand these players so they know whether to buy in to their potential. They carefully weigh in to make their own judgments of all the potential college players who are eligible for the upcoming draft on April 26<sup>th</sup>. They want to be sure, they do not want to miss out – in short, they want as close as possibly they can – a guarantee, a proof, an open and shut case.

This morning we continue in the Easter season of the church. We continue hearing from the Acts of the Apostles, instead of an Old Testament lesson, because we are hearing how the church got started and what happened after the resurrection of Jesus. Here on this Third Sunday of Easter, we continue to hear Gospel accounts of those appearances of Jesus. Today we hear from the book of Luke. Why do we read these resurrection stories from all the Gospels, even though technically we are in the year of Mark, and last week we heard from John and this week from Luke? Maybe, because like those who scout for talent, we too want a guarantee, we want proof, we want an open and shut case. We want to know that at least for the disciples, Jesus “showed them the money”, not for fortune and fame, but for life, new life, life now and forever. Maybe we read all these stories again and again, because we need to hear all these stories to convince ourselves that it’s real, that it’s true, that it happened. Because while recognize that faith

contains uncertainty, and consists often of periods of doubt, we are still hoping for some inside guarantee, we are still hoping for some type of experience where God will “show us the money” – meaning give us tangible proof. What we would give to be able to transport ourselves back to that upper room in that moment, even to be a fly on the wall and hear these things as they first unfolded. There are many times and situations in which we would like to be a fly on the wall. Maybe it’s to verify something that was actually said. Maybe it’s because we would want to see the reaction of people when certain things were first presented to them. Maybe it’s because we want to hear for ourselves the exact words that a person used. Maybe it’s because we have a lot of input we would like to offer ourselves.

I think as a fly on the wall, if I was there watching Jesus appear, and listening as he asked questions to those stunned in that room, I might have an answer for him when he asked the disciples: “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

“Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?” I would say: because Jesus,- I usually do not have a dead person standing in front of me alive; because Jesus - when a person is crucified on a cross and then placed in a tomb for several days, I am not expecting to have a broiled fish lunch with them a few days later; because Jesus - quite simply – I am scared to death because I do not know if you are a zombie, or I am seeing things, or this is some bad practical joke, or if I am the one who is really dead; because Jesus - dead people usually stay dead.

“Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?” The question that we hear Jesus ask in the Gospel text is one that the disciples

had to wrestle with in that moment. It is a question we still ask today. Why do doubts rise in your hearts in 2018? I am tempted to say to Jesus, because Jesus - I read the news. Why do doubts rise in your hearts in 2018? A lot of the times, Jesus, it does not appear as if you are winning. Why do doubts rise in your hearts in 2018? Because Jesus it seems as though the church is taking a beating, it is declining and we do not fully understand why. Why do doubts rise in your hearts in 2018? Because while technology has connected us in the world in a way humanity has never experienced before, it also has revealed just how fractured we are as your creation, as a species, as a culture, as a country, as a church, and as a family.

However, on this side of the cross, on this side of the empty grave, we also experience that appearances are deceiving. After all, Jesus was crucified, he hung on a cross, he was placed in a tomb, he was there for several days. All really appeared lost, all really appeared to be wiped out, all appeared to be cataclysmically over. But against every odd known to humanity; Jesus conquered fear, Jesus conquered pain, Jesus conquered humanity's brokenness, Jesus conquered death. Part of our trust and belief, part of hearing the good news today, part of understanding where hope resides, part of taking the leap of faith, part of living out our discipleship is viewing the world through a new pair of lenses. It is not a lens that says, "Show me the money", which quite honestly, I still want to say to God sometimes, because I still crave for inside information, I still want guarantees, I still want the proof. Instead it is a lens that rest in the Easter power of the resurrection. This is our ultimate hope and faith. We as Christians do not take everything on face value, we live in the paradox that we often do not get

to see “the money” so to speak, but yet we live in the promise of hope, the promise of new life. In our unique journeys of faith, may we seek to have our minds opened to the Scripture, may we dare to live on a deeper faith, that challenges us to go farther and trust in the resurrection hope. Amen.