

Sermon Transcript

Called to Be Witnesses

Acts 3:12-19 | Third Sunday of Easter | April 14, 2024 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ

One way that I do a check on learning with the confirmation students is to have a large group game of Jeopardy after a significant block of lessons.

The biggest challenge to asking questions about the Bible is that the four gospels all have different details from their points of view. It's often not as simple as asking a direct question—either I teach from one gospel or I need to be specific to name the writer that the question is about.

For example, look at what each writer says about the empty tomb.

Mark 16:1

¹When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices...

Luke 24:10

¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.

Matthew 28

¹ After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

John 20:1

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

Do you notice anything? None of the writers line up the same women to visit the tomb. How would you ask a question about who witnessed the empty tomb?

It's with this in mind, I am inviting three participants up to the front to play Jeopardy, Easter Edition. Let's see how our contestants handle questions based on the first few weeks of Easter.

Bob Rygh, Elizabeth Forslund, and Joseph Diemer, come on up.

Jeopardy theme

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Your name is your buzzer. If you think you know the answer, when I completely read the question, say your name. When I call on you, give me the answer. You don't have to answer in the form of a question. Just say the answer. Ready?

First one, let's see if you were paying attention right before you walked up.

The person who is identified at the tomb in all four gospels

This is the gospel that we heard the resurrection story from at Faith on Easter

In the gospel of Luke and John, this disciple is named for witnessing the linen clothes after Mary Magdalene shares the news

In John, Mary Magdalene mistakes the resurrected Jesus for being this person

The liturgical color that represents the season of Easter

Right before Jesus appears to his disciples in today's reading, he appeared to two men on this road

Last two questions!

Who is Jesus addressing when he says, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your heart?"

Which gospel says that Thomas won't believe unless he sees and touches Jesus?

Thank you all for coming up—great job!

Only one gospel calls Thomas by name for doubting. Today in Luke, all of those gathered are in disbelief. All are frightened. Nobody is immune from this feeling.

Luke makes sure to point out what's really at stake here.

That Jesus isn't just a figment of their imagination—or that he is some ghost who is haunting them.

Upon experiencing Jesus, Luke makes it crystal clear what the disciples are to do next.

This question is for all of you:

Jesus is calling the disciples to do this after appearing, eating fish, and opening up the scriptures to them.

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Be witnesses. Like David in the children’s message video, we are to be the witnesses! We get to tell others.

So, now what? What are we witnesses to? We weren’t at the tomb. What stories do WE tell the world?

Mark Vitalis Hoffman suggests that

With the emphasis on the physicality of the resurrected Jesus, Luke clearly wishes to demonstrate a flesh-and-bones Jesus, not a mere spiritual presence or apparition.

The point is that Jesus is really real and truly alive!

That is still worth preaching, and it is worth considering how Jesus is really real and alive in our world today.

- **How do our eyes need to be opened to perceive Jesus?**
- **Where do we touch the hands and feet of Jesus?**
- **How can we provide food for the world that makes Jesus’ reality experienced?**

Those are great questions to apply to our lives.

Ok, so bonus question #2.

The confirmation students packed meals at Hosanna Lutheran for this organization

FMSC

To answer the question of “**How do our eyes need to be opened to perceive Jesus?**”, our confirmation students are having their eyes opened to the reality of service at a young age. I also love the collaboration—church groups and people from across the community came together in a united purpose.

They witnessed their ability to make a difference through giving their time. Christ was with them while they served!

Next bonus question:

In order to provide “this little light” to our unsheltered neighbors, Faith is asking people to donate this item. CANDLES

I can’t think of a better way for us to **touch the hands and feet of Christ** than continuously working in partnership with our unsheltered neighbors. We are witnesses

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to the light of Christ. We cannot be blind to the needs of others. Cast aside judgment, extend empathy and compassion.

Finally, **Faith members helped volunteer this week by providing meals and staying overnight at this. HUGO FAMILY SHELTER**

To answer **How can we provide food for the world that makes Jesus' reality experienced?** serving at the Hugo Family Shelter is transformational.

It's an expression of love—that all who stay at the shelter are being walked with until they can find more stable ground to stand upon. It's one of the most powerful ministries that our church has been part of.

This need will continue. Can you give of your time the next time we ask? Can you share your heart? Can you be open to witnessing the power of Christ through the church?

We don't see the holes in Jesus' hands. We don't eat fish with Jesus. We don't have him personally opening up the scripture. **(BE WITNESSES)** Yet we are witnesses to so much more.

Jesus is completely present with us. We see Jesus in our serving. In our praying. In our care for one another. We see Jesus in the stranger and the suffering.

We see Jesus when we stop putting ourselves first, above everything else, and understand that Christ helps us to see another way.

See Christ in the world. Be Christ in the world.

And most importantly, be witness to these things. **(RAINBOW)**. When we see God at work, share that promise with the world. Amen