

***SEEING IS BELIEVING?***  
**Acts 3:12-19; Luke 24:36-48**

Seeing is believing ... Or so the saying goes. But is it? How often do our eyes play tricks on us? Take a look at these pictures. What do you see? Is this an image of fish or bird? Are the stairs ascending or descending? It is no wonder the disciples did not trust their eyes on that Easter morning.

Their day began with a jolt. Just after dawn, the women burst in. "He's not there, he is risen!" Their excitement sent the disciples reeling. They just could not take it in. It was hard enough to believe that he was gone. How could they believe that he was here again? And then, later in the day, the two returned from Emmaus reporting, "We saw him! We recognized him when he broke the bread and gave it to us. How our hearts burned within us as he spoke!" They were still talking about it when Jesus slipped in, saying, "Peace be with you."

The Resurrection appearances are so very different from the stories of Jesus' birth! This time there are no heavenly hosts pointing the way to Jesus. No angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest." There are no shepherds, no wise men, no star.

The people don't go looking for Jesus, but he comes to them. He comes and stands among them. In the midst of their darkness and doubt, their grief and confusion, he is there. Jesus still does that, you know? He comes to us, where we are. At every turn, at every corner, Jesus is with us, meeting us where we are.

In her book *Traveling Mercies*, Ann Lamott describes a time when Jesus came to her. Steeped in the drug culture of the 1960s, Lamott chronicled her spiritual journey in language that is raw and real. In one scene, she has just had an abortion, and is very drunk, as she lies down, shaky and scared. "After a while, as I lay there, I became aware of someone with me, hunkered down in the corner...The feeling was so strong that I actually turned on the light for a moment to make sure no one was there – of course, there wasn't. But after a while, in the dark again, I knew beyond any doubt that it was Jesus. I felt him just sitting there on his haunches in the corner of my sleeping loft, watching me with patience and love, and I squinched my eyes shut, but that didn't help because that's not what I was seeing him with." Jesus stays with her.

Jesus comes to us in the midst of real life, when we most need him. He comes to the disciples in the midst of their grief, and to a woman who is feeling alone and afraid. He meets us where we are and gives us what we need to believe. John Calvin called this "accommodation" to humanity. The Holy One bows before us, bending to our level. As a nurse coos to an infant, Calvin said God "lisps" to us, speaking to us in baby talk. God gives us what we need to recognize that we are not alone and to grasp the holy mystery that is beyond our comprehension.

This is the essence of the incarnation. God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ? Jesus reveals himself to the disciples by showing them his hands and feet. "See, I am not a ghost. It is I, myself." Could it be? How could it be? Our text says the disciples were "disbelieving for joy."

Sometimes life is so much better than we could ever imagine; that it almost doesn't compute. When my cousin learned that she was pregnant with twins, she was "disbelieving for joy." Hearing the heart beats, seeing the sonogram – none of that was enough to make it sink in. Even after the babies were born, it didn't seem real. After years of longing, it was too good to be true.

In Greek, "to believe" means "to give one's heart to." Believing encompasses more than our minds. It relates to where we place our trust. It is. Entered on the One in whom we place our trust.

So, this morning I ask you, to whom or what have you given your heart? Seeing Jesus' hands and feet and watching him eat broiled fish are not in themselves enough to make the disciples believe. It isn't until Jesus turns their attention to the Scriptures that they truly see. He points them back to what they already know. He recalls the words he spoke to them while he was still with them, opening their minds to understand the Scriptures. How many times had they heard him say that he would suffer and die and on the third day be raised from the dead? Yet, it is only now that they see.

Believing is seeing. After we have given our hearts to Christ, we get new eyes with which to see and a new opportunity to encounter the risen Christ who comes to us again and again in the breaking of bread and in the midst of the Easter story.