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*Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April – Third Sunday of Easter*  
*Readings: Acts 3: 12-19 & Luke 24:36b-48*

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## **Acts 3:12-19**

When Peter saw this, he said to them: ‘Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

‘Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

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

### **Jesus appears to the disciples**

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'

## Reflection

The thing for me that draws these two passages together is surprise. In the acts passage, the people are astonished to see that the lame man had been healed, and in our passage from Luke, Jesus appears to his disciples for the first time after rising from the dead.

These are undoubtedly good surprises. But good surprises aren't necessarily always easy to understand – and we all know that life is full of surprises that are not good and are also not easy to understand.

But how does Jesus meet us in our surprise? How does he engage with us? How do we handle surprise? How do we handle not understanding things that we see and situations that we find ourselves or people that we care about in?

Let's start in our passage from Luke. We find ourselves with the disciples, hearing about Jesus' appearance to two of their friends and two of their women. Although Jesus had told them that this would happen, they didn't really understand. They hadn't really joined all the dots. And then, 'Jesus himself stood among them and said to them 'Peace be with you'.

This is the big idea. Jesus comes to bring us peace.

He is not cross, or disappointed. He is patient and He is kind. There are so many times when I don't really understand what's happening, and I'm not brave enough to admit it, either to the people I'm with or even to Jesus. He asks his friends 'why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?'. I think it would be so good to put aside some time this week to be quiet, to sit with Jesus and allow him to ask you the same question.

You see He came to have a relationship with you. He knows that we get troubled and that doubts rise. And if we follow the story – he showed the disciples his hands and his feet. Ask him to show you what you need to see. And then He still won't be disappointed with you!

He is so normal. He was hungry, he asked for some fish, and ate with his friends. It's as if after this moment of vulnerability – the disciples revealing what they needed from Jesus – he met their needs and then spent time with them. Just hanging out and being together.

This is what Jesus wants to do with you today. He wants to give you what you need. To reassure you. To ease your troubles and calm your doubts, and to spend time with you.

In the Acts passage, the people were astonished that Peter and John had healed the lame man. Like Jesus, Peter and John explain clearly what had happened – that despite the people handing Jesus over to be killed, disowning him before Pilate and asking for a murderer to be released, despite killing the author of life – God raised him from the dead. It's ok if you need these truths to be explained to you again and again. It's ok if you have forgotten them or dismissed them or even denied Jesus. Because today is a new day, Jesus is with you and he is asking you why you are troubled.

I know that I have disowned Jesus. I know that it was my sin too that held him to the cross. But I am so encouraged today by our final verse – 'Repent then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord'.

Amen.

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