

Welcome to our podcast today,

Thinking today about being in Jesus presence

Our reading is from Lukes gospel chapter 24 where Jesus appears among his followers gathered together,

the 11 disciples that are left since Judas has left them

along with the others who are still following,

still clinging on to a belief in Jesus and what he meant to them

(pause)

Last week we thought about the story of Thomas in church

And how he struggled to believe without evidence

He wanted to see Jesus as the other disciples had done

"Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Thomas found it hard to know what the truth was.

Found it hard to know what to believe

He wanted to see the evidence as he had missed out on seeing the risen Jesus for himself.

He was trying to work out what to believe.

Thomas is often referred to as 'doubting Thomas' but maybe he's more 'truth-seeking Thomas'.

He wanted to believe

but he wanted to be sure

He wanted to have evidence that what the others said was true

What evidence do we need before we will believe

What evidence will our friends and family need to be shown before they will come to believe as we do

(pause)

In this weeks reading from Lukes gospel the disciples

and the followers of Jesus are given evidence

Jesus appears among them and in an echo of what Thomas said he says

‘Look at my hands and my feet, and see that it is I myself.

Feel me, and you will know,

for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can see I have.’

(pause)

The disciples and Jesus followers are gathered together mourning his death

Trying to understand what has happened and what they should do now

Can they really believe the news from the women who met the angels at the empty tomb

That Jesus has risen

That he's alive.

They certainly didn't at first

they thought it was nonsense what they said

they just didn't believe them

But what about now

What are they to think when Jesus appears among them in the flesh

'They were terrified, thinking that they were seeing a ghost.'

I'm sure we would be too if Jesus suddenly appeared among us

But that is what we will be reflecting upon today

Jesus being among us

Alive once more

He's not dead, he's alive

and is calling us to take that message out to the world

'the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations'

How are we going to take the message out

Who are you going to tell - Jesus is alive

(pause)

**Let's pray**

Loving Father we come together now to meet  
with you.

To be in your presence.

(pause)

We come to pray to you,

And just to sit in contemplation of all that you  
are.

(pause)

Father as we hear the Bible being read help us  
to listen.

Help us to hear you speak.

Change us through your word.

Transform us inwardly.

(pause)

We're listening Father.

Listening to what you are trying to teach us  
through Jesus words and actions.

Help us hear Jesus calling us to go

To be witnesses to his life and resurrection

May our hearts and lives reflect our faith and trust in the risen Lord Jesus

May we be witnesses to all that Jesus lived and taught

And teach others about repentance and the forgiveness of sins,

In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

(pause)

Our reading is from Luke's gospel

Reading from chapter 24.36 to verse 48

I'm reading from the Good News Translation of the bible.

'suddenly the Lord himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

37 They were terrified, thinking that they were seeing a ghost. 38 But he said to them, "Why are you alarmed? Why are these doubts coming up in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet, and see that it is I myself. Feel me, and you will know, for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can see I have." 40 He said this and showed them his hands and his feet. 41 They still could not believe, they were so full of joy and wonder; so he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of cooked fish, 43 which he took and ate in their presence. 44 Then he said to them, "These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms had to come true." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later, 47 and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.'

# Sermon

Suddenly the Lord himself stood among them.

That verse so stood out for me as I read this passage this week

Suddenly the Lord himself stood among them.

(pause)

We come together in church to be in God's presence

We come to worship to be close to God

To know God close

To be close to God

(pause)

What if this happened to us

Suddenly the Lord himself stood among us.

How would we respond,

what would it mean to us.

(pause)

Just think about that for a moment

Jesus appearing among us

Jesus suddenly is standing right next to me

Here with us in the flesh.

How would we respond

Like the disciples and first followers did

With fear and alarm

Like the disciples and first followers did  
with doubt in our hearts and minds.

‘Why are you alarmed?’

Why are these doubts coming up in your  
minds?’

(pause)

This is what we believe

That Jesus is alive

And we believe that he could come and be here physically present with us

As we know that he is spiritually present with us

(pause)

Even though Jesus stood among them the first disciples doubted

They believed what they were seeing was a ghost

an apparition

It couldn't possibly be real

But it was real

It really was Jesus standing there

And even though he was standing among them

Even though they could see him

and hear him speaking to them

He still had to prove to them that he was physically present

That he was flesh and blood and not a ghost

‘Feel me, and you will know, for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can see I have.’

Look if you still don't really believe that its really me here in flesh and blood give me something to eat

give me some food

And Jesus ate some fish in their presence to convince them that he wasn't a ghost

(pause)

What do we need Jesus to do to convince us that he is alive

That he is real

(pause)

We have the gospels

We have the New Testament and Old Testament explaining to us who Jesus is

Helping us to understand why Jesus is the Messiah

And what it means to us that he is the Messiah

(pause)

We have the scriptures that show us why Jesus died and what he accomplished when he died.

But if we are going to understand them we need to know them

And we can only know them if we read them

and read them regularly

Read them over and over again.

(pause)

Jesus spent the last three years of his life explaining the scriptures to his disciples and followers

‘These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you’

These are the things that we read about in Luke

and Matthew

and Mark

and John

(pause)

As we read them

as we study them

as we think about them

We understand what Jesus did and why

(pause)

As we read the law

the Prophets

and the Psalms

we understand why Jesus had to do what he did

We understand why Jesus died and rose again.

We understand the message about repentance and forgiveness of sins.

(pause)

everything written about me in the Law of Moses,

the writings of the prophets,

and the Psalms had to come true'

Jesus told his disciples and the followers

Then Jesus does what we would all like him to do for us.

He takes them through the Scriptures and helps them to recognise verse by verse where it speaks of him and his life.

The passage says he opens their minds to understand the scriptures

Potentially there is a miraculous element to their minds being opened

Its like all at once they suddenly understand

The scales have fallen from their eyes and spiritual insight has been given to them.

(pause)

For a few months there I was producing bible study notes to help you understand the scriptures

To help you read the set passages for each Sunday

and come to a deeper understanding of them

and come into a closer relationship with God.

I've not produced them for a few weeks now as it was taking a lot of time to put them together.

And I wasn't sure if anyone found them helpful or if anyone was really using them.

(pause)

It was a big time commitment from me to produce them

which I'm happy to do

But that also meant a big time commitment from you to use them

And to make a daily time commitment to read the bible and to pray

so that your knowledge and understanding of God would be deepened

So that your personal relationship with the risen Christ would be deepened and strengthened

(pause)

Please let me know if you'd like me to produce them again

If they were helping you

Or if there was some way I could have made them better for you to understand the Bible

and help you deepen your relationship with God

(pause)

This passage ends as Matthews gospel ends

With Lukes version of the Great Commission

Matthew ends with go make disciples

Teach people to obey everything I have commanded you.

Luke ends with you are witnesses of these things.

And to be a witness means we need to share the message with someone

We need to tell others what we know

What we know of Jesus

What Jesus means to us

And in his name

in Jesus name

we need to share the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins

So that the whole world can come to know about Jesus

and be saved

**(pause)**

The disciples and followers were to start sharing in Jerusalem

They were to start telling people around them.

The people they lived among

and then go out from there.

We too need to start among the people we live with

our neighbours

our work colleagues

our friends

and go out from there

The message needs to be preached

and all of us are the ones who need to preach it.

**Amen.**

## **Let us pray**

Father just like the first disciples and followers  
of Jesus we struggle in our faith

We have doubts

We're just not sure

Is Jesus really alive

Did he really rise from the dead

Is he here with us now

(pause)

Help us Father to believe

Help us Father to know that Jesus is alive

To know him here now with us

To know his peace and love filling our hearts

(pause)

Father we give thanks for the joy and peace  
that fills our hearts knowing that Jesus is alive

Knowing that we are forgiven for all our sins

Knowing that one day we too will live in  
eternity in the new Jerusalem

(pause)

Help us Father to share this message with the  
world

The message of repentance and forgiveness  
of sins

Help us Father to witness to our faith  
in our words and by how we live our lives.

So that our families

our friends

our neighbours

may also come to believe as we do

and join us in worshipping our risen Lord

(pause)

In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

As we go about our daily lives let's continue to reflect on what it means for Jesus to be among us

And think about how we witness to our faith in him

and share the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins