

## WEEK #1 – JOURNEY OF WITNESS

April 20 – April 26, 2009

MONDAY – April 20<sup>th</sup>

**CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: Fill me with joy...and dispel my unbelief.**

*O Lord, thank you for your resurrection and the joy which it brings. Though I do not always understand your mysteries, I strongly desire to believe. I have received the gift of your peace and long to live in harmony with others. You have commanded that I be a witness for you and I desire this also. Help me, in this time we spend together, to be empowered through your Spirit as we continue this resurrection journey. In your powerful name, I pray. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:36b-43**

**KEY VERSES: Luke 24:41-42:**

**(41) “While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ (42) They gave him a piece of broiled fish, (43) and he took it and ate in their presence” (NRSV).**

As we enter into this second week of the Easter season, we visit Luke’s version of Christ’s first appearing to the disciples. Unlike John’s version we visited last week, it is not just Thomas who is full of doubt, but all the disciples. The gift of peace is given to still their terror and evidence of his reality takes a very natural turn: he asks for food and eats it before them. No ghost would do such a thing and then he begins their final instructions before they are sent to be his witnesses. Before we can serve as witnesses, we need to receive his guidance and his empowerment. This is why they are told to wait until they receive power from above. Christ does not remain on the earth long. It is no longer his home. But before he leaves his disciples for the heavenly kingdom, he has a few last preparations for them so that they will be his witnesses for the rest of humanity.

Doubt can be a healthy thing when it leads us to examine our faith experiences for the truth. Luke tells us that even though the disciples were doubting the veracity of their eyes, they were full of joy and wonder. I can remember times when I saw things which would cause me to utter the saying, “I can’t believe my eyes!” When something occurs which we do not expect, especially something which brings us great pleasure, we may wonder how or why this has happened. It is not a doubting which disturbs us, but is easily overcome. The disciples were not upset by Christ’s resurrection, they just needed to adjust their thinking. In fact, I submit that it was a lot easier for the disciples to accept Christ’s resurrection than it would be for us today to accept someone who had just been executed, or even someone close to us who had died a natural death suddenly appearing in our living room. These disciples had lived with Jesus for three plus years as he performed miracle after miracle, including raising the dead. He had also predicted both his death and resurrection repeatedly throughout their time together. They may have had some feelings like, “This can’t be happening!” but they had felt that way many times as Jesus did the unexpected. Their joy and wonder were more significant than their doubting. They didn’t run away and hide. They didn’t turn their backs on the one they loved and trusted. It didn’t really matter how it had happened, they were just glad that it had.

Christ returned to his disciples and treated them as if the betrayals had never occurred. He greeted them with a blessing of peace to still their fears of the Jews. He invited them to verify his identity. He ate with them, a very natural and normal event from their past. And he

began to teach them again by opening the scriptures to them concerning the Messiah, that is, the meaning behind the suffering, death and resurrection the scriptures had foretold. He did not stay with them all the time. Earth was no longer his home. But he still had a few things to impart and they needed to spend some time with him after the resurrection in order to be his witnesses. If they only saw him once from a distance, without talking with him, touching him and eating with him, it would be easy for others to deny their experience. Christ made sure that their testimony contained enough reality for faith to ignite. You and I have probably had our doubts about the resurrection, about the miracles Christ did and perhaps even some of his teachings. In John 20 from last week, we know the purpose behind the writings we call the New Testament. They were written so that we might have faith and achieve the eternal life which Christ came to bring. It was normal for the disciples, and us, to have doubts as Christ was raised from the dead. But the testimony is full and natural and believable. I would have been much more skeptical had the disciples accepted him back without any doubt or wonder. If he had shown up in their midst and they responded with, "O, there you are. We wondered when you would show up." I would have known they were crazy. They showed natural emotions and natural reactions. But in the end, they believed and they witnessed to others. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 28:5-10, 16-20; John 20:19-31**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. What doubts do I harbor about the Christ?
2. Do they lead me to a search for truth or hinder my faith journey?
3. Do these doubts keep me from sharing my faith with others? If so, what will I do about it?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

Read the book [The Case for Christ](#) by Lee Strobel. It was written by a journalist who set out to poke holes in the Biblical account of Jesus and who came to faith by his quest for the truth. It is an excellent book for those who are seeking answers to their doubts.

*Dearest Savior, I praise your name and thank you for your loving care for me and for all your disciples both past and present. I, too, sometimes have doubts, yet I would learn from them so that my faith will be stronger. Thank you for your blessing of peace. Continue to prepare me to witness more fully to those around me. May I share your love with someone today. In your wondrous name, I pray. Amen.*