

## 8/17/25    **The Power of Shared Meals: Broiled Fish and Broken Fear**

***Luke 24:36-43***

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Hall of Fame baseball player, Yogi Berra, was once asked whether he wished to have dinner at a highly regarded restaurant, and he replied with a remark that might also be said of Cape Cod in the summer, “Nobody goes there anymore. It’s too crowded.” Another saying attributed to Yogi Berra is, “Always go to other people’s funerals. Otherwise, they won’t come to yours.” The most famous Yogism is probably, “It ain’t over ‘til it’s over.” It’s a motivational expression that encourages perseverance and the refusal to give up, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable odds. After Jesus’ crucifixion, it looked like it was all over for him and his followers. But it wasn’t over. God wasn’t finished. God raised Jesus to life again. In today’s passage — the final one in our *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* series about meals Jesus shared with tax collectors, friends, Pharisees, and followers — Jesus doesn’t just invite himself over, as he did with Zacchaeus last week. He appears to his disciples after his crucifixion, death, and burial, and, perhaps not surprisingly, they’re shocked and afraid — even though some of the women had told them that Jesus was alive, and the Lord had appeared to Cleopas and Simon Peter. However, people aren’t raised from the dead every day, so we shouldn’t be too critical of the response of the apostles and their companions when Jesus showed up.

***Luke 24:36-43*** (NRSV), “While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ***‘Peace be with you.’*** They were **startled and terrified**, and thought that they were seeing **a ghost**. He said to them, *‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’* And when he had said this, **he showed them his hands and his feet**. While in their **joy they were disbelieving and still wondering**, he said to them, *‘Have you anything here to eat?’* They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.”

In Luke, this is the final meal Jesus shared with the apostles and their companions. It’s not the Last Supper, which is familiar to many of us. Rather, it’s a meal

that Jesus participates in after his crucifixion, death, and burial, which is both shocking and surprising. Jesus eating fish in the presence of his friends helps to break their fear, and fills them with joy that Jesus is alive, death has been defeated, and they have hope now and in the future. Everything has changed. This passage is one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the reality of Jesus' bodily resurrection.

Let's go back to the beginning and look at the story more closely. Each of the four gospels begins in its own way; Luke opens his Gospel with stories about Mary, angels, and shepherds that are uniquely his own. They're not found in any of the other gospels. Luke closes his Gospel with a resurrection narrative that is also almost uniquely his own. It's believed that Luke had access to Mark's account when he was composing his Gospel, and you can see the influence of *Mark 16:1-8*. However, Luke offers some elements that are only found in *Luke 24*. In the church's memory across 2,000 years, as well as in our own, we tend to remember elements from all four gospels; however, there are always insights to be gained by not blurring each evangelist's telling of Jesus' story. Today, we're going to go a little more deeply into Luke's resurrection account, as we celebrate "Easter in August," and look at one more important meal Jesus has — this time, after his resurrection.

Luke's resurrection narrative consists of **four parts**: the empty tomb (*Luke 24:1-12*); the appearance on the road to Emmaus (*Luke 24:13-35*); an appearance in Jerusalem, which is our focus today (*Luke 24:36-49*); and Jesus' blessing and departure (*Luke 24:50-53*). In Luke, all the appearances of the risen Christ are in — or near — Jerusalem, and they're told as events that happen on one day. In talking with our sons, Nathan and Greg, this week, when I mentioned this, they both said that was the case in classical Greek theater — that the action generally occurred in one place, on one day. Nathan mentioned that Luke was a Greek, unlike the writers of the other gospels, and he would have known this. They both told me it's called, "The classical unity of action, time, and place." That's what we see in *Luke 24*.

Not only do the events in *Luke 24* happen on what we call Easter Sunday, the whole chapter is framed as a worship experience much like we're engaged in right now. There's an announcement that Christ is risen, then comes a period of instruction from the Scripture, followed by an experience of the living Christ in the sharing of food. In a setting initially filled with fear and disbelief, after receiving further instruction from

Scripture, the disciples receive Christ's promise of the Spirit, and are commissioned. Christ gives them his blessing, and invites them to a life of joy, service, and praise, and people leave with peace, belief, and joy. The whole of *Luke 24* is a worship experience and an outline for worship.

Our focus today is *Luke 24:36-43*, which is like *John 20:19-21*, where the risen Christ appears to the eleven disciples and shares a meal with them. At this point, according to Luke, Christ has appeared to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women. The women told this to the apostles, but they didn't believe them. Christ had appeared to Cleopas and his fellow disciple on the road to Emmaus, and to Simon Peter.

What Jesus does in this moment is life-changing: Jesus gives them his **peace**, offers them **proof**, and assures them of his **presence**. **Peace. Proof. Presence.** Jesus offers these not just to them, he offers them to every believer who has ever struggled with **fear, doubt, or discouragement**.

**The Peace of the Risen Christ (Luke 24:36).** Jesus says, "*Peace be with you.*" This is not a casual greeting; it's a divine declaration. The disciples were startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. They also were grieving the death of Jesus, and were coping with the loss of their leader and friend. Peace is what they lack. Many people today lack peace in their heart and spirit, and in their life. There is chaos in the world that we can't control. There are things in life that happen to us that are beyond our influence, yet profoundly impact our lives. The risen Christ comes to us in our fear and uncertainty, and speaks peace into our chaos. Your circumstances may not change immediately, but the presence of the risen Christ can change your attitude toward them. Like the storm suddenly stilled by Jesus' word, his peace is not the absence of trouble, but we have the assurance he is with us — whatever we're facing.

Jesus asks, "*Why are you **frightened**, and why do **doubts** arise in your hearts?*" We each have our own answer to that question. Fear is something we all face in life. We fear the loss of loved ones. We fear rejection. We fear physical decline. We have financial fears. We fear for the future. We fear violence. Freedom from fear is something most people long for. Jesus comes to his followers who are grieving, hurting, and fearful for their own futures, and says, "**Peace be with you.**" Whatever is making you fearful today, imagine the risen Christ being with you in that situation and saying, "**Peace be**

**with you,”** and receive those words, and that gift, like a blanket of comfort on a cold day.

**The Proof of the Risen Christ (Luke 24:37–40).** The second thing Jesus offers is **Proof that he is alive**. He said to them, “***Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.***” And when he had said this, **he showed them his hands and his feet**. He can see that they’re frightened. He knows they have doubts. Jesus is sensitive to, and aware of, their emotions and feelings, just as he is to yours. So how does he respond? He gives them evidence.

Do you hear the physicality in these verses? “*Look at my hands and my feet...Touch me and see.*” The risen Christ invites investigation, because Christian faith is not blind — it’s rooted in historical reality. The scars are not erased after resurrection; they’re transformed into eternal testimony — “***he showed them his hands and his feet,***” which bore the marks of his crucifixion. When your faith wavers, remember the cross and the empty tomb. Evidence matters, and God doesn’t mind our questions.

There are five parts to today’s story, just like in the Road to Emmaus narrative that precedes it. The risen Christ appears; the disciples don’t recognize him; they’re chided for doubting; food is shared; they respond in wonder and joy. However, the big difference from the Emmaus story is **the physical presence of the risen Christ**. Jesus provides solid proof that he is alive. Despite reports from the women, Cleopas and Simon Peter, the apostles and their companions are frightened and think they’re seeing a ghost, spirit, or apparition. Ignatius, a second-century bishop of Antioch, paraphrased Jesus’ words as, “See that I am not a bodiless ghost” (Epistle to the Smyrneans 3:2). We might say the disciples thought they were encountering the dead, not the living.

The Christian faith doesn’t embrace the Greek notion of the immortality of the soul, that there’s an indestructible soul or spirit that comes into the body at birth and returns to God at death. The gospel teaches that Jesus died, and God raised him from the dead, and our hope, as believers, is based on this central affirmation of the Christian faith. With his emphasis on the bodily resurrection and the physicality of Jesus’ presence, Luke is proclaiming that the resurrection of Christ will not fit the old notion of immortality. God has acted in a unique way in raising Jesus.

The risen Christ's word to the church is, "*See my hands and my feet*" (Luke 24:39). Easter is forever joined to Good Friday. To follow the risen Christ is to follow the one who suffered and bore the cross. Perhaps the greatest proof of the resurrection is the change in Jesus' followers, who go from grief, fear, and hiding, to joy, praise, and public sharing that Jesus is alive. We sing, "You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart!" Which is true, but not complete, because Jesus also lives eternally.

**The Presence of the Risen Christ (Luke 24:41-43).** After offering his followers **his peace and proof** that he was alive, Jesus offers **his presence**. He invites them to examine his body, and then asks for a piece of broiled fish, and he eats it in their presence. This represented a double insistence that he was alive, and not dead or a spirit. His followers, in their joy, were still struggling to believe their eyes, even as Jesus eats a piece of fish in front of them — showing he's truly present in bodily form. This is more than proving he's alive. Resurrection is not just survival after death — it's the beginning of restored relationship with God.

Jesus is not just alive "somewhere out there"; He is alive with you, for you, in the everyday moments — whether breaking bread or sharing your burdens. Christ's **peace** addresses our fears. Christ's **proof** answers our doubts. Christ's **presence** transforms our lives. Our faith, as Christians, rests on the person and the authority of Jesus, and the reality of his resurrection. A person who predicts his own death and resurrection — and then it happens — is worth listening to! When we leave this time of worship, like the disciples left that room, we don't walk into a trouble-free life; we walk into it with the risen King beside us. When fear creeps in, remember Jesus' greeting: Peace be with you. When doubt rises, remember his wounds: Touch and see. When you feel alone, remember him eating a piece of fish: I am truly right here with you.

When the disciples realize that Jesus really is alive, they're filled with joy. Jesus is more than a historical figure from 2,000 years ago. He is alive and present today. The physical resurrection of Jesus changed his followers and changed history. They couldn't help but share what they had seen, heard, and touched. This is expressed in *1 John 1:1-4* (NIV), which begins, "That which was from the beginning, **which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched** — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we

have **seen it** and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and **has appeared** to us. We proclaim to you what we have **seen and heard**, so that you also may have **fellowship** with us. And our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this **to make your joy complete.**”

The resurrection of Jesus is cause for unending joy, hope, and praise. We’ve been talking about meals with Jesus, and, in *Matthew 8:11*, Jesus declares, “*And I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*” Jesus, in all his meals, highlights the inclusivity of God's kingdom, suggesting that people from all nations will be welcomed based on their faith, not their ethnicity or lineage, and we’re all going to enjoy a heavenly feast.

There’s an old folk story, variations of which have appeared from medieval Europe to China, called the allegory of the long spoons. It describes heaven and hell as similar places. Both feature tables filled with food that can only be eaten with utensils. Both have utensils that are three feet long. The difference is, in hell, where everyone is selfish, greedy, or cruel, no one is willing to help or serve anyone else, and everyone goes hungry, even though there’s wonderful food on the table. In heaven, it's the same scene, only everyone is delighted to help and serve others, and everyone is happy, and no one goes hungry. Make the choice to build your life on Jesus; he’ll make your life better and make you better at life. May his peace, his proof, and his presence be enough for you to follow him all the days of your life, until you join the heavenly feast.

### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. In *Luke 24:36–43*, Jesus appears to His disciples and eats broiled fish with them. What does this ordinary act of eating communicate about who he is and what the resurrection means?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose to share a meal, rather than give a sermon or perform a miracle, as his first interaction with the frightened disciples in this moment?
3. The disciples were “startled and terrified” (*Luke 24:37*). What fears might they have been facing, and how does Jesus address those fears?
4. How have shared meals (family dinners, coffee with friends, potlucks, etc.) played a role in breaking down fear or building trust, in your own life?
5. In this passage, Jesus meets the disciples’ doubts with both evidence (showing his wounds) and presence (sharing food). Which of these two approaches speaks more to you when you are struggling with faith, and why?
6. If you were in the disciples’ place, what might you have felt seeing Jesus eat food after His resurrection? How would that have shaped your understanding of life after death?
7. Throughout our Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner series, we’ve heard how lives can be changed over a meal. What practical steps could we take as a group, or individually, to use shared meals to bring peace, connection, and faith into others’ lives?