

Discipleship Moment

Text: Luke 24:13-35

This weekend we began a new sermon series: Proof. Over the next several weeks we are examining the stories in the Gospels where the disciples interact with a dead man (who came back to life!): Jesus.

We live in a world that is obsessed with evidence. Everyone from online conspiracy theorists to mainstream, peer reviewed science journals look at a collection of evidence and make an assertion based on that evidence. It might be a theory about 9/11 or accusations about vaccinations on one side. Or studies on the effects of a medication on the human body on the other side. No matter how mainstream or fringe a theory might be, everyone demands evidence.

The Christian community has had the temptation to do the same thing. Groups have popped up that try to show, based on evidence that the Earth is young and the stories in Genesis are reasonable. Other Christians have looked at archeological evidence and say that the stories in Genesis aren't reasonable, and the earth is old. Meanwhile the wider culture has framed religious belief (belief in some higher power) as a matter of mere *faith*. Faith is cast as something opposed to evidence: when there is no evidence there is only faith left. Some Christians have begun to use the word *faith* in this way: in opposition to evidence. So whatever a Christian might believe about the historicity of the early Biblical texts, they still rejected *evidence* and instead had faith in a higher power.

Did you know that we have a definition of faith in the Bible? In the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, the author defines faith this way, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (NRSV). Other translators use the phrase *evidence*, or *proof*, of things hoped for. In either translation, the meaning is clear: faith is assurance, faith is proof.

In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time after his resurrection! And, at the time of his writing the letter, many of those people were still alive. He says to his readers something like, "don't take my word for it, go ask the eyewitnesses yourself!"

Faith is not in opposition to evidence. Faith is trust in the evidence. When Jesus was raised from the dead his disciples' lives were changed. They had an experience that radically changed the way they looked at the world and radically changed how they lived their lives. They began telling the stories about how they saw Jesus with their own eyes, as John says in 1 John, "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched without hands..." John and the other disciples saw and touched Jesus after he was resurrected. Many of them were killed because of their proclamation.

Something happened 2,000 years ago. Something that changed the world. We may disagree on how to interpret how old the earth is, we may disagree on who wrote Genesis, but every Christian, and I think anyone who is intellectually honest, must come to grips with the fact that Jesus was real. And all the evidence points to his resurrection. We have proof, we have the witness of the disciples, and we have the Holy Spirit within us, witnessing to the resurrected Jesus. We will explore this more over the next few weeks.

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once

1. Do you feel assured of your faith? Do you ever have questions? What are they?
2. Write down your questions or concerns about the Christian faith. Next week, either put those questions in the offering plate on Sunday or email Pastor Erik with your questions. Pastor Ben and Pastor Erik will look at these questions and begin to answer them over the next few weeks during this series.
3. How do you define faith (or how have you defined it before reading this)?
4. Is there a difference between faith and evidence to you? What are the differences?
5. Do you feel like you have proof for your faith? Why or why not?
6. Do you believe that someone would die for a lie? Why would the disciples of Jesus be willing to die for the good news of Jesus' resurrection?