

## Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.quoteslyfe.com/quote/Seeing-s-believing-but-feeling-is-God-278260>

<Get a fully vaccinated volunteer>

I am going to hit you with something bigger than your head. Is that OK? <Let them respond>

<Hold up grocery bag containing it> What if I told you it is bright orange and green? <Let them respond>

What if I told you it is made of artificial materials? Does that help? <Let them respond>

<Pull pillow out of bag> Can I throw it at you now? <Let them respond>

<Toss pillow at them> Was it safe for me to hit you with that? <Let them respond>

<Pull out fake rock> How about this rock? Would it be safe to hit you with this? <Let them respond>

<Toss fake rock at them> What do you think now? <Let them respond>

<Address everyone> We can be told about something, we can even see it, but until we experience it with all of our senses, usually we are not as sure about it. In a sense, it is not quite fully real to us.

How are some of the ways you have experienced the reality of God in your life? <Let them respond>

May you have many joy-filled experiences of God in your life, and help others to see the wondrous reality of God in theirs.

## Gospel lesson

Last week we heard the story of the doubting disciples featuring Thomas from the Gospel of **John**.

This week we hear about that first evening after the resurrection from the Gospel of **Luke**, just after travelers returned from Emmaus reporting that Jesus had been with them.



*picture screencaptured from*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOZ5FVNkETw>

### Luke 24:36b-48 (NRSV)

<sup>36b</sup> While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

<sup>37</sup> They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

<sup>38</sup> He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

<sup>39</sup> 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."

<sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

<sup>41</sup> While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

<sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

<sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate in their presence.

<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

<sup>46</sup> and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,

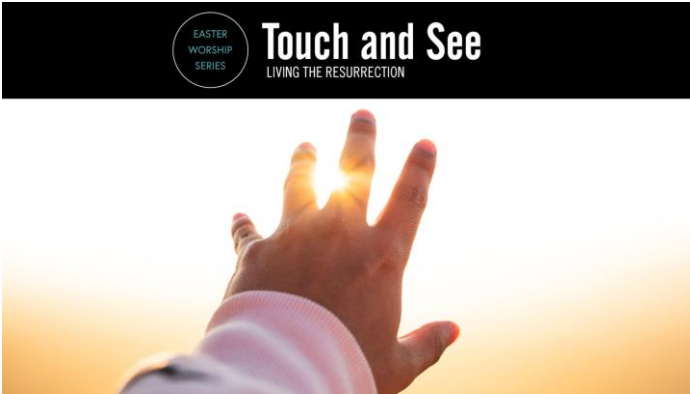
<sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Hymn “We Walk by Faith” TFWS #2196; sung to the tune of Amazing Grace, UMH #378>

## Message: Unless I see



picture adapted from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/Living-the-resurrection/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

God always with us, as we take time now to further consider today’s scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

that we may see You more clearly, love and embrace You more dearly, and thus follow You more nearly.

Amen.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES  
The United Methodist Church

**Living the Resurrection**

- ♥ April 4 – Terror & Amazement
- ♥ April 11 – Unless I See
- ♥ **April 18 – Touch and See**
- ♥ April 25 – Listen to My Voice
- ♥ May 2 – Abide in Me
- ♥ May 9 – No Greater Love
- ♥ May 16 – We Are Yours

Living the Resurrection

This week’s summary states:

“Jesus is trying to ground the disciples’ faith in the reality of his presence, in the concreteness of

his being. He told them to touch him; he ate in front of them. He was announcing that he was real. What can we provide, what hands-on proof can we give that Jesus is alive among us? Of course, we have been in a pandemic and touching is still not something we want to engage in. But we can still give examples of lives being touched, hearts being touched.”

When I first started attending the Methodist church in Sherburne, I was startled to hear the pastor at the time preaching simply, “God is real.” To me, God is more real than the earth we stand on or the air we breathe, always present and sustaining us. I did not understand the need to teach people about the reality of God.



*picture screencapture from*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dvegVBMdFo>

In the Gospel lesson today, the eleven disciples

- who had served Jesus throughout all His ministry,
- who had seen many miracles, including people being raised from the dead,
- who had been selected by Jesus Himself to be His apostles to the world,

- who had already been told by Mary and the other women that Jesus was alive again, and
  - who had just heard of Jesus appearing on the road to Emmaus with teaching of scriptures and breaking of bread,
- thought they were seeing a ghost! He was right there in front of them, and still they did not believe their eyes! Instead, they were terrified.

So Jesus told them to touch and see, to prove that He was not a ghost. That calmed them, but they *still* were disbelieving and wondering. A common belief at the time was resurrection of the spirit but not the body; there was also thought that bodies might be reanimated but not really living. They could not believe that Jesus was truly physically alive again until he ate some food.

What does it take for you to truly understand that Jesus is very much alive and active in your life?



picture from <https://slideplayer.com/slide/2492109/>

In this scientific age, many people want a way to detect and measure the presence of anything claimed

to be real. Some years ago, I explained why I do not think we will ever be able to do that with God.

In order to prove something exists, we have to be able to use where it is not as a contrast. But God is omnipresent - that is, everywhere - so even if we had equipment that could somehow measure levels of spirit, we would not be able to show the presence of God as distinguishable from the background levels of everything we measured; God is in everything.

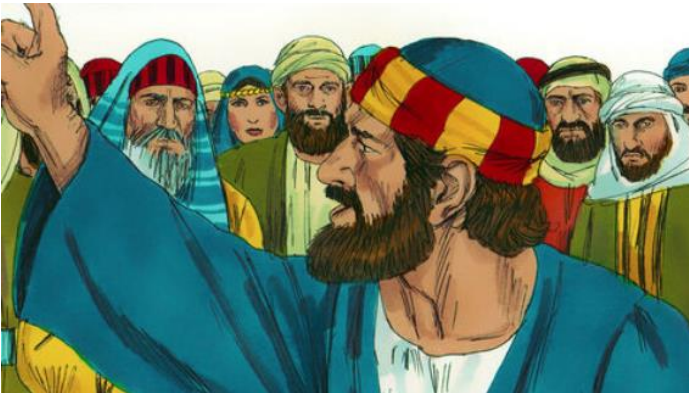
So why do we believe what we cannot see and touch? Because we experience it in our lives nevertheless.

Dating apps aside, there is no such thing as a scientific love-meter. Despite scientists talking about release of endorphins and other responses to one another, there is no definitive way to measure the true commitment of a loving relationship. Yet, somehow, we know when we are in one. We know we love those who take care of us and those we take care of, those with whom we are glad to share life.

And God is the source of all life and love. Because I am alive and I have love in my life, I know that God is real. Because I see others sharing love, helping one another, building better lives, I know that God is real. I hope that through what I do, that I help others also to understand that God is real.

And I know that Jesus is alive, fully human and fully God, because of the testimony of the apostles. They were able to touch and see the truth of the resurrection. Not just a reanimated body, but fully alive, even hungry: Jesus returned in full unity of body and spirit. And He commissioned the disciples as apostles, to spread the Good News.

This sunk in so well, that in Jesus's name, Peter was even able to perform miracles like Jesus had. Peter healed a man who had been lame since birth, and all the people in the temple who saw them were astonished.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/lame-beggar-healed/>

In the reading from Acts today, Peter used that moment of awe as an opportunity to preach: to tell the people of the critically important news about Jesus and to give them the chance to repent – to reconcile with God, who has been working to give them new life since the time of Abraham.

Why are we so hesitant to do that? Why do we not trust the words of the apostles, have faith in Jesus,



and turn to God? Why do we not proclaim it to the world at every opportunity?

The letter from John states, “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” (NRSV)

So are we in a catch-22, that we do not listen to the apostles because we do not know God, and we cannot know God unless we listen to His children? **No.**

In the gospel for today, Jesus came to the disciples right where they were, to ground them in reality, what they could touch and see. By this, they learned the truth.



We too need to look at what we can touch and see: the people in our lives, the love that is shared, the work we can do – right where we are – to make God’s love more manifest in the world. By seeking love and hope in life, we come to know the source of all. And through our relationships, we can help others learn of Jesus too.

As John continued in his letter, “Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” (NRSV)

And in that hope, let us profess our faith together with

**The Apostles’ Creed, Traditional Version** UMH #881

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
He descended into hell.

The third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand of God  
the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge  
the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* church,  
the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

\*universal

### <Doxology>

### <Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

Mighty God who brings life and hope out of death and despair, help us hear the invitation Christ offered to the disciples, "Touch me and see!"

Make us bold to grab hold of the risen Christ - not for this day but for all our days.

May we offer our gifts this morning not to the church historical - the church that was - but to a church that is becoming, that is still being born, that Christ will bring into the future.

May our eyes and ears and hearts continue to hold on to Him as we help Christ lead His church forward!

Give us wisdom as we go about our daily lives. And help us, Lord, with:

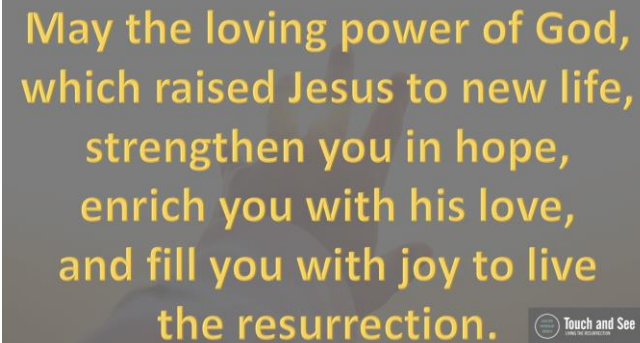
- Healing touch and comfort for all who are ailing.
  - Coronavirus victims - isolated; **school**; out-of-work; health care workers (especially: Marie Curri, Laura Davis, Nicole Marshall, Vince Marshall, Heidi Newton, Jennifer Tibbens-Scalzo) & those serving critical needs
  - **Lolita White** - recovering from surgery (afib ablation)
  - **Gary Sweet** - radiation therapy
  - **Elaine Perkins** - heart issues and life decisions
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  - -
  - **Family of Hobie Morris** - passed away March 13; wife Lois in nursing home with dementia
  - **Family of Richard Van Dusen** - passed away Wed Apr 14
  - **Family of Larry Parkhurst** - passed away Mon Apr 12
  - **Family of Philip Davis** -
- Thanks for
    - -
    - -
  - Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
    - Travelers
    - Family far off
  - Social unrest - dismantle racism and reform systems
  - Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
  - Help us to be fearless in talking about our faith as a normal part of daily living.
    - For the sake of this our local church, one part of Your great church, guide each one of us this week to invite someone to come know You better.
    - Help us to encourage one another toward faith in You and toward living together in true Christian community.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,  
<The Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Crown Him with Many Crowns" UMH #327>

<Benediction><sup>1</sup>



May the loving power of God,  
which raised Jesus to new life,  
strengthen you in hope,  
enrich you with his love,  
and fill you with joy to live  
the resurrection.

background from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/Living-the-resurrection/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/third-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

As we leave today, look for proof of the Almighty through the love and life we share with others.

May the loving power of God,  
which raised Jesus to new life,  
strengthen you in hope,  
enrich you with his love,  
and fill you with joy  
to live the resurrection.

Go in grace, as the Holy Spirit guides you. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from words posted on the Third Space website. <http://third-space.org.uk/blog>, reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/02/easter-benediction.html>.