

Third Sunday of Easter, Gospel, Year B

BY THE BOOK

Luke 24:36a-48

Third Sunday of Easter

Analysis by Chris Repp

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. 38He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39Look 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." 40And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43and he took it and ate in their presence. 44Then 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." 45Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48You are witnesses of these things.

DIAGNOSIS: Cut Off from the Word

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Startled and Terrified

Sin, death, and evil are persistent realities in this world. That's something we get used to over time. They're in control.

It's just the way it is. We learn to live with that, and even to benefit from the way things work, colluding with the powers that be. So when that order is disturbed, we become disoriented—startled and terrified like the first disciples encountering life in the midst of death. This, we think, cannot be. Death is supposed to win, not life.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Doubt in Our Hearts

The problem is that we trust the powers that be. We trust that death is final, that sin is inevitable, and that evil is woven into the fabric of reality. And because we trust those powers, we doubt the promise of life made by a man who was arrested, tortured, and executed by them. We had hoped that he would redeem us (Luke 24:21), but our own eyes have shown us that that was not to be. Death wins again.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Ignoring Scripture – Disconnected from God

Trusting in the powers that be, we ignore the one revealed to us in Scripture, the one who created us and all things, and the one who promises to conquer sin, death, and evil on our behalf. Just words, we think. Empty and naïve. And so we close our minds to the Scriptures and separate ourselves from God and God's promises. Death wins in the end.

PROGNOSIS: Reconnected to the Word

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Scriptures Connect to God's Saving Work

But God will not let our deadly confession be the end. God's project all along has been life, and the Scriptures testify to this. God's Word has been at work since the foundation of the world to speak life, love, community into being. And the culmination of this work was the victory of God the Son over the

powers that be, a victory achieved by enduring their worst. When Jesus opens our minds to the Scriptures, we become connected to his saving work throughout history, leading to the empty tomb. God means for life, not death, to win the battle for the cosmos.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Peace in Our Hearts

With the Scriptures so opened to us, the Holy Spirit graciously grants us faith to trust the promises that they reveal. And trusting in God's promises we begin now to distrust the promises of the powers that be—or should we say, faithfully and hopefully, the powers that were. Peace with God leads to peace in our hearts, but enmity with those powers. Life is winning.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Witnesses

With minds opened to God's Word, and hearts transformed by God's peace, we become a living extension of the Scriptures, testifying to God's mighty acts in our lives. Enlightened by the Scriptures and animated by the Holy Spirit we become agents of God's ongoing saving work of bringing repentance and forgiveness to the world. Life wins in the end.