I included verses 33-35 and vs 49 to my reading of the gospel this day. As well as reading Acts 11-21.

Last week we looked at the gospel of John’s report of when Jesus met the disciples the evening of his resurrection. Today we are looking at Luke’s report. We begin as the story of the walk to Emmaus is ending. Cleopas and his companion had been walking away from Jerusalem that afternoon when they were approached on the road by a stranger. Only after inviting him in to break bread with them, did they realize the stranger was indeed Jesus. They ran back to the disciples in Jerusalem to tell them what they had experienced, after hearing that Jesus had also appeared to Simon.

In the midst of all this, suddenly, Jesus appears and starts talking to them. And like in John’s gospel Jesus says, “Peace be with you.” We are told they thought he was a ghost. Like we would be if we thought we were seeing a ghost, they were scared. Jesus, as he always does, read their hearts and says, “Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

Doubts and faith are like two sides of a coin, they will always co-exist. Doubts do not mean you do not have faith, that is important to understand. I have no doubt this pulpit is real. It is a hard piece of wood and if I were to hit it, my hand would hurt. No doubt. I can see it, feel it, it is real.

But faith in Jesus rising from the dead, can cause doubts in us. That is the difference between proving something by seeing it or feeling it. We were not there with Jesus when he died on the cross or when he appeared to the disciples and the others. We did not get to see the wounds on his body or touch the hole in his side. We did not get to eat with him that night or hear him say, “You are witnesses to these things.” We can only believe them to be true. Some days that is easier to do than other days.

There are times in our lives when we have doubts. I cannot speak for anyone else, but for me, it is not the tragic times in my life when I doubt. When I think back over my life, like when I was 18 and my grandfather died, the first death of a loved one that I could remember. I did not doubt Jesus had died so my grandpa could have eternal life. Instead, I took solace thinking that now he could walk without his two canes, and that he was with my aunt, his daughter, who had died when I was little. And I have not doubted after my mom died or my brother or close friends and family died. In my darkest hours I hold tight to the promises of God and it brings me peace and comfort.

I doubt in the strangest times. When I wonder how it could be that God could have a son with Mary and the Holy Spirit. How this Son of God could heal people with a word or a touch. How his dying could give us life. I doubt when others say they are as certain as I am about Jesus living and dying for me as they are to think there is anything after this life. What if they are right? I wonder.

But in this passage, we can know that Jesus truly understands we will have our doubts and our fears and that we can come to believe in things that are beyond our ability to prove them like we can this pulpit. I can understand a pulpit made of wood. I cannot understand how God does things. However, I can believe that God has done all of these wonderful things and so much more in the world, but that means I will have doubts because I don’t understand.

When I do believe in God and even in my doubts, that is not the end of the story. Jesus had accomplished what he came to earth to do. And soon, Jesus was returning to God. If that had been the end of it, what would have become of us?

Romans 15 says, “13For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’14 But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

That night Jesus let the disciples in on a little secret. They were witnesses to seeing it was Jesus who was the one who had fulfilled all the scriptures. He “opened their minds” so that now they could make all the connections. They understood and they no longer doubted he was the Messiah and that all he went through was done to the whole world would be saved through him.

But if the world didn’t know that, how are they to be saved? How could they believe if they never heard of Jesus. How could they hear of Jesus if no one ever talked about all that Jesus had done, who he was and how he was the fulfillment of the scripture. It was up to them to be the witnesses. They were the ones with the beautiful feet who would bring the world the good news.

The book of Acts is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke. When in the first chapter of Acts, just before Jesus ascends into heaven Jesus says to disciples, “‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”

They have now been sent, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to go and tell the world their sins can be forgiven and that Jesus is the Messiah for them. And that is just what they did in the first reading for today.

The disciples also had the power to heal and they healed the man at Soloman’s Portico. This man had been lame since birth and when the man asked only for some money, Peter told him, “‘I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.’” And he walked, more than walked, he leaped. It was said in Isaiah that with the redemption of Israel, “the lame shall leap like a deer.”

This drew the attention of the people and so Peter began to tell the world, beginning in Jerusalem, the good news. He told them he and the others were witnesses that the one they rejected and killed was the Author of life, the one who Peter and the others saw with their own eyes had been raised from the dead. They had faith in this one to heal this man.

They also had faith to forgive the people because this was the way God could have fulfilled the scripture in order that their sins and the sins of the world could be forgiven and for eternal life to be had by all who believed, even it they doubted.

And so it began. From this core group who had been the witnesses of all that had happened to Jesus, from his calling of his disciples to his ascending into heaven, comes the good news that this day, almost two thousand years later, I am so privileged and honored to share with you, even if I doubt sometimes, even if you do too.

It does not end with us though. It cannot. We are each called in our baptisms to continue to be the beautiful feet who bring the good news in our words and in our actions. Jesus is alive. That has to make a difference in our lives and how we live.

Being a follower of Jesus means more than just praying and coming to church or doing devotions. As we learn today, the intention for Jesus’ followers are to proclaim this good news all over the world. We are his living witnesses now, as it has been passed down to us from those who were before us, like my grandpa, my mom and my brother.

We can bring the good news in large ways and in small ways. Some can proclaim to large groups like Peter did. Others can just share their story like, I imagine, the formerly lame man did. However you show God’s love in words to your children or grandchildren or in deeds when helping a neighbor, do it in faith and in doubt. And peace be with you. Amen.