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**Title:** What Now...You Are a Witness

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**Text:** [Luke 24:44-53](#)

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### **Can I get a witness?**

Those were the words spoken to our group by the police officer.

Several years ago, we were sitting on the patio of our favorite local Mexican restaurant, enjoying an early dinner, when right in the nearby parking lot, two cars ran into each other. The police were called and apparently the two drivers could not agree on what happened. So the officer was looking for a witness or two. Now, I'm a preacher, so what I heard was "can I get a witness" but the officer might have said it differently. He came over to our group and asked, "what did you see?"

That can be a difficult question to answer.

We are concluding our series ...Now What? Living as resurrection people in a hurting world. Today we encounter the Risen Christ encountering his disciples one final time. He is leaving them; we are told he will be carried into heaven. These are his final words to them according to the Gospel of Luke.

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.* Luke 24:44-48

Reading over Jesus' words, he gives an account of what the disciples then and what we now *are to be a witness to?* I have to wonder if the Disciples thought to themselves or even out loud. *I am witness. But what exactly did I see?*

Have you ever thought of yourself as a witness? As someone whose own life will somehow show others what the life of Jesus looks like?

Luke's Gospel ends with a clear transition. A transition that was important then and remains important today. It ends with a transition from Jesus' ministry to your ministry, to the church's ministry.

The power of the witness of God's love now is with you and with us collectively as the church.

Now, if this is overwhelming to you, you are in good company. Just think, after all the time the disciples spent with Jesus, you would think they would have a decent idea of what Luke calls the scriptures. You think they would know what they have seen, what they witnessed. But they don't. They are confused, mixed up, maybe even doubtful.

But Jesus is clear- he's passing the mantle to us- Charging you and I with living as resurrection people in a hurting world- *you will be my witnesses.*

Where do we find the courage, we need in order to be a witness?

One of my all-time favorite movies is the movie Big Fish. The story follows Will Bloom as he cares for his dying dad, Edward Bloom. Edward is known for his stories. In fact, it's about all he does at his age, tell stories of his own life. Will has become estranged from his father simply because he can't relate to him anymore, feeling frustrated by the lack of details and half-truths in his stories. Now, his father is dying and Will seems lost in trying to explain the legacy of his father, and what it means for his own life.

As Edward is on his deathbed one evening, he turns to his son Will and asks him to tell the story of how he dies. Will is stressed and is about to call the nurse to take care of him, before realizing that this is the end, and what his father needs is a conclusion to his story. So he begins to finish his father's story for him, telling him about how he dies, and the beauty that surrounds the celebration of his life, as all his friends are there to see him go. As Will is telling the story, you witness a transformation, where he realizes the specifics of the story aren't as important as the meaning.

Will had come to realize that his father told stories not because he was trying to hide details or make himself look more important than who he was, but rather because he knew that stories had greater meaning and depth. He realized that the proper response to the passing of his father was to continue the story, to express how much his father loved other people, and how they loved him in response. To express the love between he and his own father. At the very end of the movie, a few years later, Will's own son is heard telling some of the stories that were told originally by his grandfather. Will

had learned how to tell stories, how to express meaning, depth, and love, passing it on to his own family.

Maybe what is meant but opening our mind to the scriptures, is opening our minds and hearts to telling the story. Telling the story of God's love for all people, to telling the story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

How does this Gospel of Jesus shape you and shape how you see the world? What difference does it make in your life?

Today we hear both a challenge and a promise

*You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.* Luke 24:48-49

The Risen Christ's last recorded words according to the Gospel of Luke

Jesus promises that each person will be clothed with power from on high. The Greek word here is **dynamis**- which we would recognize as dynamite. The news that we are bearing witness to is so good that it will act like dynamite in the world.

Jesus is passing the mantle to you, to us, to the church.

You may be thinking/how can I be a witness now, when so many things that I recognize about church, about faith, seem to have been taken away.

Gathering together, singing together, sharing communion from a common loaf of bread, shaking hands with and hugging those whom we love dearly.

It's important to remember that the Disciples had lost a lot that was familiar as well. They could no longer reach out and touch their friend Jesus, they could no longer go directly to him for guidance. So, we can see how they would have felt much the same way the church feels in this time.

Jesus never wanted his followers simply standing around admiring him. He never wanted a church or a group of people to simply gather in one place and merely worship him. Rather, he wanted witnesses

You see, the end of the Gospel of Luke is not the end of the story of Jesus, rather it is the beginning of our story. It is the beginning of the story of the followers of Jesus, with the power of the resurrected Jesus being the spark needed to get us moving.

...Now What? Well, we are all witnesses. Maybe this time, at least in the life of the church and our lives as followers of Jesus, have given us the pause we needed to clear out the things that weren't all that important to begin with. It's given us time to focus on the mission of Jesus rather than the mode of the church, the ways we've always done things. Take online worship/ we now have the ability to reach more people than ever through worshipping online. Someone asked me this week, "even when we gather in-person, will we still have live worship online?" I remarked that not only will we, but we, without even really meaning to, have launched a new worship service. A great example of the mission being the same/but the mode being completely different.

This has given us the time to ask ourselves, "Are we more in love with the way we've always done things or more in love with the mission of Jesus?"

You are the witnesses of these things... You have been given the power, the dynamite, the spark of God.

Now What....That's where we get to write the story moving forward.