

## **Those Who Have Not Seen**

Norwalk Christian Church, April 28, 2019, Easter 2, Year C

Have you ever believed something because you had to? Actually, that's a pretty dumb question. Of course you have! We do this all the time.

Most of us get in airplanes with very little knowledge behind the physics of it. (That's the right branch of science right? I don't do science.) But we may not understand how the plane flies. We just believe it will take off, stay in the air, and land. Because we have to. Because we want to get to our destination quickly.

We believe the food we eat isn't contaminated, the bridge will hold when we cross it, the medicine we're prescribed will do its job and not hurt us worse. We believe our loved ones will love us, be there for us. We have to believe. If we didn't, we couldn't survive in life.

When we were babies, and our parents left us for the first time, we cried like crazy, thinking they might never come back. But they did. And we stopped crying. We started believing.

To get up and live our lives everyday requires an incredible amount of trust. Not everything can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

But this story...this story is hard to believe.

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When do dead people rise? We're sitting in a funeral home. We've been preaching hope and resurrection. Maybe we aren't preaching hard enough, because I haven't seen any resurrected bodies around here.

This...this story is hard to believe.

And yet, here we are, centuries after the fact, confessing our belief. Confessing that this did happen, and because it happened, it changes everything.

What are we thinking?!

Look at Thomas. He had a front row seat to everything. He saw it all. Heard it all. There was no translation issues, or redactions, or edits—he saw and heard the unadulterated life and teachings of Jesus as it happened.

Yet, when he missed the living Christ passing through walls, even he could not believe it unless he saw it.

I get that. I'm Team Thomas today. Show me! Let me see! And Jesus shows him. Jesus shows up again, the day after Easter, and shows Thomas his wounds. And Thomas believes.

But what about us? Show me!, we say. But as of yet, no Risen Christs have passed through these walls.

It's hard to believe. Let the preacher be the first to admit it. Believing in resurrection is hard.

But have you ever believed something because you had to?

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On Easter, we shared the prayer concern from our host, Eric O'Leary, about his 3-year-Old son Conor and the terminal, genetic disease he's just been diagnosed with. It's deeply sad.

And seeing that, I have to believe in resurrection.

The Easter Sunday massacre in Sri Lanka. While people were worshipping the Risen Christ, gunned down in worship! Hundreds dead.

And seeing that, I have to believe in resurrection.

I read last week some of the stories of violence and terror people have lived through in Central America, forcing them to flee across borders, praying for a better life for their family.

And seeing that, I have to believe in resurrection.

Natural disasters, climate change, cancer, car crashes, addiction, overdose, suicide.

And seeing all of that, all of the pain, all of the suffering, I have to believe in resurrection. Because I need hope. This world needs hope.

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But I saw something else the other day, too. After the outpouring of attention at the fires of Notre Dame Cathedral, people rose awareness of the burnt out black churches in Louisiana, started not by accident but as an act of terror. And \$xxx million was raised to rebuild those churches.

And seeing that, I have to believe in resurrection.

And I went into our church last week—the building down the road—and it's still a mess, but it's almost done. Did you know it was a year ago this week that we started our

Capital Campaign? It was a dream then. We didn't know if we could raise the necessary funds, but we did, and now it's almost done. People sacrificially gave. People poured time and energy into the design and deconstruction and then construction (and soon clean up). In the grand scheme of things, it's small. But for us, it's an incredible accomplishment. And it's almost done.

And seeing that, I have to believe in resurrection.

I saw a friend the other day, too. She had lost her husband a while back. And she's making it. It's not easy. She has bad days and better days. But she's making it.

And seeing that, I have to believe in resurrection.

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Just so you know, this preacher doesn't believe because I have it all figured out. If you want answers for every question of faith. If you want proof, I don't have any to offer today. Maybe there's a other preacher in town who can offer that—but not here.

But what I have, I give you...I used to think I was one of the ones that Jesus talks about, those who are blessed because they believe without seeing. And yes, from a point of view, I am.

I've never seen the risen Christ walk through doors. I've never seen resurrection.

Except, I have seen resurrection, and you have, too. Not the full flower of resurrection. No dead people sitting up. But I've seen resurrection nonetheless. The bud, the bloom of the resurrection flower.

Because every time a life is turned around, every time you have hope, everytime goodness overcomes the evil in our world, in small ways and big, that's resurrection. Not dead men walking resurrection, but that's the bulb, and the flower is inside.

I've seen resurrection. And you have, too. You see it everyday. In others. In Yourself.

We are the ones who have seen.

But there are those who haven't. There are those caught up in the darkness of hopelessness. There are those in the midst of grief and loss, in pain, seeing their life or loved one's life slipping away. And they haven't seen.

But we have. We have seen! And we have a story to share. "I have seen the Lord!" That's the message of Mary after seeing the risen Christ. Christ is risen, indeed! That's what we declared again this morning.

And yes, we could use a little more proof. But I don't know about you, but I choose to believe anyway. Because, well, I have to. I have to believe. I couldn't live in this world without resurrection.

And I invite you, too, to join me in believing. Let us open our eyes and look for resurrection. It's all around us. And let us go out into this world, bringing hope to those in need of hope, sharing our testimony, we have seen the Lord!

Amen!