

**Sermon Series: “Lasting Faith”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN–3/31/2002(Easter)**

**Title:** “Easter Faith”

**Text:** John 20: 26-29

**Intro.:** *Ills. The Tiger, the Man, and God*

**Theme:** Easter Faith is not the warm/fuzzy feeling gotten from an Easter Sunday worship but is an ongoing deep-seated trust in a living Savior which doesn’t need constant proof but walks by faith and not by sight.

### ***A shared faith***

- Ongoing faith falters when we neglect our connection to the Body of Christ
  1. Thomas missed the resurrection weekend because he chose not to be with the others
    - a. Thomas known for earlier skepticism (John 11), may have gone home after Friday and said, “What’s the use!”
    - b. Often *tragedies, shame, guilt, fear* keep us away from regular gathering with others to celebrate a living Jesus
  2. Many church goer’s listen to Satan’s lie about past by permanently removing from hearing/sharing Easter *truth*
- Shared faith is contagious and uplifting
  1. Listen to the joy and renewed hope in disciples’ cry, “*We have seen the Lord.*” (vs. 25)
  2. Each Sunday, every fellowship opportunity, is an opportunity to celebrate and remember the risen, living Lord
    - a. Sunday was chosen by the early believers to remind them of Resurrection Sunday
    - b. “*Let Christ's word with all its wisdom and richness live in you. Use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to teach and instruct yourselves about God's kindness. Sing to God in your hearts.*” Col. 3:16
    - c. Training our thoughts to think of weekly sharing your faith with other believers as a passion rather than a duty

### ***A fact-based faith***

- Sometimes our scientific, fact-based philosophy can actually be used by God to serve our faith well
  1. Granted Thomas was brashly making a bravado statement in his sinful pride to justify his following of Jesus
    - a. But he got it right—the convincing proof that Jesus was the real deal was in the “marks”
      - Nail prints to show a death had occurred for sins (*Without a death there is no forgiveness of sins. Heb9:22*)
      - Spear wound in side confirmed Jesus died (John 19: 34) and his resurrection that he was who he said he was
  2. Sometimes the facts of Jesus’ resurrection power star us right in the face and yet we don’t see them
- Grounding yourself on the “*Easter facts*” of your faith to withstand the storms and waves of life
  1. **Ills.:** **Believing even when things go wrong**
  2. “*So faith comes from hearing the message, and the message that is heard is what Christ spoke.*” Rom. 10: 17
  3. If faith comes from what is heard, then getting into the word here and at home is important for you in sustaining faith
  4. Listen to what the resurrected Jesus said to them and to us, “*He showed them his hands and his side. . .and said, “Peace, be with you.”* (vs. 20,21)

### ***A forgiveness-sure faith***

- Jesus’ resurrection assured that no sin was left unforgiven and our responsibility
  1. “*If Christ hasn't come back to life, your faith is worthless and sin still has you in its power. . .But now Christ has come back from the dead. He is the very first person of those who have died to come back to life.*” 1 Cor 15: 17, 20
- If Jesus is risen and our forgiveness is sure, use our resurrection faith to shatter the guilt in our life and others
  1. **Ills.:** **You’re forgiven, already!**

### ***An intentionally sightless faith***

- Jesus uses tangible miracles to confront unbelief among his children
  1. Jesus references Thomas doubt and calls it unbelief (vs. 27)
  2. We have trouble with calling our doubt unbelief (even the translations fudge on the words *apistos* and *pistos*)
  3. Jesus graphically demonstrates his resurrection truth to Thomas and us to drive home what faith is— *sightless trust*
  4. (Use Indiana Jones movie clip of stepping out in faith)
- Jesus blesses those who live by faith and not by sight in Him who has already proven his past love for us
  1. “*You believe because you've seen me. Blessed are those who haven't seen me but believe.*”
  2. Jesus’ past love in his death and resurrection is meant to assure our current faith and our future hope
  3. **Ills.:** **Faith for tomorrow**

## The Tiger, the Man and God

A man was being chased by a tiger. He ran as hard as he could until he was at the edge of a cliff with the tiger in hot pursuit. The man looked over the edge of the cliff and saw a branch growing out of the side of the cliff a few feet down. He jumped down and grabbed the branch just as the tiger reached the cliff. The tiger growled viciously as the man sighed a great sigh of relief. Just then a mouse came out from a crevice and began to chew on the branch. The man looked down to what was a drop of a thousand feet and sure death and looked to the heavens and yelled out, "Dear God, if you are there, please help. I will do anything you ask but please help." **Suddenly a voice came booming down from heaven, "You will do anything I ask?" it questioned.** The man shocked to hear a reply to his plea yelled back, "I will gladly do anything you ask, but please save me." **The voice from heaven then replied, "There is one way to save you but it will take courage and faith."** The branch began to weaken from the mouse and the tiger was still growling a few feet above the man, "Please, Lord, tell me what I must do and I will do it. Your will is my will." **The voice from heaven then said, "All right then, let go of the branch."** The man looked down to a fall of a thousand feet and certain death. He looked up at the hungry tiger a few feet away and he looked at the mouse still chewing on the branch. Then he looked up at the heavens and yelled, "Is there anyone else up there?"

## Believing even when things go wrong

UCLA alumni and fans made UCLA football coach Pepper Rodgers's life miserable during a season when his Bruins got off to a horrible start. Nobody in Southern California would hang out with him. "My dog was my only true friend," Rodgers said of that year. "I told my wife that every man needs at least two good friends. She bought me another dog." Rodgers can be rigid in the face of adversity. When his players at UCLA were having difficulty adapting to the wishbone offense he'd installed and the school's alumni demanded that he adopt another system, Rodgers didn't budge. The wishbone, he said, "is like Christianity. If you believe in it only until something goes wrong, you didn't believe in it in the first place."

## You're forgiven, already!

Garrison Keeler writes in his *Lake Woebegone Chronicles*: "Larry the Sad Boy ... was saved 12 times in the Lutheran church, an all-time record. Between 1953 and 1961 he threw himself weeping and contrite on God's throne of grace on 12 separate occasions--and this in a Lutheran church that wasn't evangelical, had no altar call, no organist playing "Just as I Am Without One Plea" while a choir hummed and a guy with shiny hair took hold of your heartstrings and played you like a cheap guitar. This is the Lutheran church, not a bunch of hillbillies. These are Scandinavians, and they repent in the same way that they sin: discreetly, tastefully, at the proper time. ... Twelve times! Even we fundamentalists got tired of him. ... God did not mean for us to feel guilt all our lives. There comes a point when you should dry your tears and join the building committee and start grappling with the problems of the church furnace and ... make church coffee and be of use, but Larry kept on repenting and repenting."

## Faith for tomorrow

I like that story about the boy and his father who were planning a fishing trip for the next day. That evening as the father was putting his son to bed, the boy hugged his father's neck and said, "Daddy, thank you for tomorrow."

## **John 20:24-29**

Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, who was called Didymus, wasn't with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>The other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord."

Thomas told them, "I refuse to believe this unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my fingers into them, and put my hand into his side."

<sup>26</sup>A week later Jesus' disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>27</sup>Then Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Take your hand, and put it into my side. Stop doubting, and believe."

<sup>28</sup>Thomas responded to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus said to Thomas, "You believe because you've seen me. Blessed are those who haven't seen me but believe."

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