

**Sermon Series:** “Easter Stories for Modern Times” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 4/18/2010

**Title:** “Believe it, or not!”

**Text:** John 20:19-29

**Intro.:** *Illus.: Ripley’s Believe It or Not! – Loved Ones As Diamonds*

**Theme:** For our faith in Jesus to be more than just religion, it must move from trusting in the things that I can see or do and putting our trust in Jesus as the one who takes away our reason for fear and doubt with his peace.

***Easter’s peace gives no quarter to fear (verses 19-23)***

- Fear paralyzes our transformed living for Jesus
  1. Fear isolates and takes our eyes off of Jesus
    - a. *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. Matthew 10:28-31*
  2. Fear keeps us from our witness
    - a. **Illus.: Paralyzed into silence**
    - b. Not only do we not think about witnessing but actually it is an anti-witness to faith
  3. Fear denies forgiveness
    - a. *“Fear has to with punishment.” 1 John 4:18*
    - b. What burden of sin/guilt are you protecting and not letting Jesus to root out of the basement/attic of your heart?
    - c. **Illus.: the attic**
- Easter’s Peace gives Jesus’ power and hope for living
  1. Peace through His presence (**vs. 19-20**)
    - a. Jesus stands among them to remind them and demonstrate to them that his Word and promise were true
    - b. Today, we celebrate the Lord’s supper in which Jesus, really stands among us again, to show its good for us too
  2. Peace through His authority (**vs. 21**)
    - a. He sends us out into the world to be his spokespeople/ reps — not intimidated by what others think/say
    - b. *Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. 1 Peter 3:13-15*
  3. Peace through His forgiveness (**vs. 22-23**)
    - a. **Illus.: Read the book**
    - b. Shows them mark of suffering (hands) and of death (side) so that they would know that “**it is finished**”

***Easter’s faith makes no accommodation for doubt (verses 24-29)***

- The living Jesus confronts all forms of self worship which is the breeding ground of doubt in our hearts
  1. Our limiting trust only to things which originate from us (*Unless I see - vs. 25*)
  2. Our arrogant demands of God to act in our time and with our plan (*Thrust my finer...thrust my hand- 25*)
  3. Our materialistic unbelief — trusting in only things we can touch, prove, produce, or spend
  4. *Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live. Isaiah 55:2-3*
- The living Jesus comes with the same reconciling power of forgiveness to reclaim us
  1. With His patience (three times repeats (*Peace be with you – 26*))
  2. With His gentle reach (**Isaiah 42: 1-3**) (as opposed to Thomas’ aggressive words) (**27**)
  3. By offering His faith in place of our unbelief (**27**) (*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Hebrews 11:6*)
- So will you stop living the life of doubt and believe?
  1. So you can experience his blessing (**vs. 29**)
    - a. **Illus.: Believe in the resurrection**
  2. So you can start living
    - a. *These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name John 20:31*

### **Loved Ones As A Diamond**

U.S.-based LifeGem and Britain's Phoenix Diamonds, for example, also offer diamonds made from hair, which contains more carbon than ashes meaning a gem can be created from the hair of a living person, or from someone who has been buried rather than cremated. LifeGem even offers diamonds made from dead pets. Often the gem is mounted in jewelry, which the bereaved then wear to maintain close contact with their loved one. But some customers have different plans. One widow, Brimer said, carried around her husband's diamond in her handbag. Others have them mounted on the deceased's table in the local pub.

### **Paralyzed into silence**

During his years as premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev denounced many of the policies and atrocities of Joseph Stalin. Once, as he censured Stalin in a public meeting, Khrushchev was interrupted by a shout from a heckler in the audience. "You were one of Stalin's colleagues. Why didn't you stop him?" "Who said that?" roared Khrushchev. An agonizing silence followed as nobody in the room dared move a muscle. Then Khrushchev replied quietly, "Now you know why." ***Today in the Word, July 13, 1993***

### **The Attic**

I read a story in the *L. A. Times* a long time ago. A guy goes to the house where he grew up and knocks on the door. Because he hadn't been there for 20 years, he finds himself getting sentimental. He asks the owners if he can walk through the house, and they let him. While in the attic, he finds an old jacket of his. He puts it on, reaches into the pocket, and pulls out a stub. It's a receipt from a shoe repair shop. He realizes he had taken a pair of shoes there twenty years ago, and in the midst of the move, he had never picked them up. On a whim he decides to go to the shoe repair shop. Just to be funny, he takes the receipt out and hands it to the guy behind the desk, saying, "Are my shoes ready?" The guy goes back to the workroom for a minute, comes back to the counter, and says, "Come back a week from Thursday." That's what happens when you bury things and forget them. We rekindle them someday and they still cause you the headache because you didn't deal with them 20 years ago. **John Ortberg, in his sermon "Intercepting Entropy," PreachingToday Audio, Issue #295**

### **Read the book**

Two explorers were on a jungle safari when suddenly a ferocious lion jumped in front of them. "Keep calm" the first explorer whispered. "Remember what we read in that book on wild animals? If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run." "Sure," replied his companion. "You've read the book, and I've read the book. But has the lion read the book?" **Unknown.**

### **Believe in the resurrection**

When the world seems a defeat for God and you are sick with the disorder, the violence, the terror, the war on the streets; when the earth seems to be chaos, say to yourself, "Jesus died and rose again on purpose to save, and his salvation is already with us."

Every departing missionary is an act of faith in the resurrection.

Every peace treaty is an act of faith in the resurrection.

Every agreed commitment is an act of faith in the resurrection.

When you forgive your enemy

When you feed the hungry

When you defend the weak

you believe in the resurrection.

When you have the courage to marry

When you welcome the newly-born child

When you build your home  
you believe in the resurrection.

When you wake at peace in the morning

When you sing to the rising sun

When you go to work with joy

you believe in the resurrection.

**Carlo Carretto in Blessed Are You Who Believed. Christianity Today, Vol. 40, no. 4.**

**John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup>So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." <sup>20</sup>And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>So Jesus said to them again, "Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." <sup>22</sup>And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>"If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained."

<sup>24</sup>But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and thrust my finger into the place of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup>After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be* with you." <sup>27</sup>Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed." [NASB]

**Isaiah 42:1-3**

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. "He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. "A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.