

Sermon on John 20:19-31
April 7, 2013

“Faith is not really about what we believe, but what difference it makes in our lives that we believe.”

It had been a strange morning. First the women come running in with this unbelievable tale about going to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body and they found it empty! The stone had been rolled away and the clothes he had been wrapped in were just lying there. They came running back to tell us and then Peter and John went to see for themselves. They saw what the women had seen, but they didn’t understand it so we all went home to grieve in our own manner.

But Mary had stayed and claimed that Jesus had appeared to her and had told her to tell us that he had risen from the dead! What strange tales hysterical women tell these days! I don’t know why the others stayed in that locked room, but I’ve always been the practical one and it was time to move on; to get back to work, so I left them and went home.

The next time I saw my brothers they too had an unbelievable tale to tell me. They said that they had met in the house and locked themselves in because you know that the Romans not only kill the leader of a rebel group, but they also try to kill all of those who followed to make sure the group would never rise to power again. There were enough people in Jerusalem who knew who we were and would have no problem turning us in to the Roman authorities, so they hid in fear of their lives.

That part I understand, but what happened next I have a hard time believing. They claim that Jesus walked through the locked doors and just stood there among them. He knew they were afraid so he said, “Peace be with you.” Then Jesus showed them his

hands and his side and they also believed that Jesus was raised from the dead and they rejoiced! Then Jesus told them that he was sending them into the world just like his Father had sent him. And Jesus breathed on them and gave us all the Holy Spirit.

They wanted me to believe this tale on their word alone! I just couldn't. I needed what they all got—a glimpse and touch of the risen Lord! I told them that I wanted to see him for myself and I wanted to touch his wounds; so a week later I was with them in the room. The doors were shut, but they were no longer locked.

Then Jesus came and stood among us again and he looked at me and said, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not become unbelieving, but believing. All my questions were answered in that moment and I fell to my knees exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus spoke again, but he seemed to be speaking not just to me, but to all who would come after me; "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

We were all changed after that meeting with Jesus. We were no longer afraid of what would happen to us—even death. We had a story to tell that was too important to keep to ourselves; no matter what the personal cost was going to be. Jesus was sending us out into a hostile world to tell others of who God is in Jesus Christ and there will be times when people won't believe us. But if we believe that God sent the Son into the world not to condemn it, but that the world might be saved through him then we can't keep this to ourselves!

So we went back into Jerusalem and began preaching in the Temple about Jesus being God's Messiah. Many joined our group and many brought the sick to us to be

healed. We faced floggings, imprisonment and even death. We were given strict orders not to teach in Jesus' name, but nothing could keep us from telling others the good news. Our belief in the risen Lord was not how we thought, but how we acted.

As you walk out from here into the hostile, everyday world; who are you going to tell this wonderful story to? When you feel doubts and fears creeping upon you remember this, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe!"