

Come to Believe

Faith Resurrected: Part 1 “Come to Believe”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – April 11, 2021

2nd Sunday of Easter

Readings: Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

Reflection: Psalm 133

Greeting: Leader: Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Prayer: Almighty God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Grant that we who celebrate our Lord’s resurrection, by the renewing of your Spirit, arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 133

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore. (Psalm 133 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 133 and we hear a song of rejoicing. That we hear of the joy of celebrating the Lord together. How is community important to your faith in Christ? Do you express the joy to be blessed by the Lord? How do you share with others the ways in which the Lord has blessed you? How do we share in the joy of our Risen Savior?

Prayer: O God, our bread, our milk, and our honey: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us to your table. Feed us with your plenty, and enlarge our table for all the hungry; hear our prayers and have mercy, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 4, verses 32 through 35.

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32-35 NRSV)*

Our next reading is from 1 John chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 2 verse 2.

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 1:1-2:2 NRSV)*

Our last reading is from John chapter 20, verses 19 through 31.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my

God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:19-31 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We begin our Easter series entitled Faith Resurrected with our first message “Come to Believe.” Every message in this series is going to be using a phrase from the Gospel reading for that week. This week we look at what it means to come to believe, why our belief is important, and how it joins us together. We get an account of belief, where often we call Thomas out because of his unwillingness to believe without being able to experience. But I think that one of the things that we can actually take away from this story is Christ's reaction more than anything else. Because Jesus didn't shun Thomas. He didn't really chastise him as much as he wanted him to believe. But then he points out the thing that would have been true of all of the disciples, whether they had seen him before or seen him after. Did they believe because they had seen? But blessed are those who without seeing had come to believe. And we have this idea echoed in the end of our gospel reading. That there were many other things that Jesus had done that weren't recorded but what was recorded in John's gospel was so that people would come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that because of the belief that we may have life, that we may share in the resurrection because we believe.

But it's interesting what else comes with believing, with giving ourselves over to a life in Christ, with sharing in that journey. And one of those things is what we get from the story that we have in Acts. And for that, it's that those who believed came together as one. They shared what they had. And because of their great love for each other, because they loved each other as Christ loved them, they shared in what they had. Because together, they believed in Christ their Savior and they believed in his love. And because of that they came together and there wasn't a needy person among them, because they believed. It gave them the strength to be able to share out of love. That the apostles told of the resurrection and the people who came to believe were moved by this and they joined together so that they could live a life in Christ, which meant they cared for each other. And we hear all of these things echoed in First John, and John in this letter helps to wrap things up, that he's testifying so people will believe. So that people will understand that eternal life is there for them. That we can live in a resurrected Christ. That we can believe in our Risen Savior so that we can share in that grace and that love, so that we can be a community of believers together. And so that our sins can be washed away. One of the things that is in that letter is not that John thinks that once the believers are together, that they won't sin anymore, that you come to believe in Christ, and you'll never sin again. The purpose is to keep us from sinning. But it's also to let us know that if we do fail that we have an advocate. That Christ is with us, and that his great love for us was shown to us so

that we could be forgiven. And not just for our sins but for the sins of all, so that all could come to believe.

So, when I was thinking about this. Thinking about everything that we have been reflecting on all throughout Lent and then when we looked at the crucifixion and the resurrection. I thought about what strength it gives us to be able to believe. Because it's not just the idea that we believe and that's it and everything is set. We don't simply say "I believe" thinking everything's done and we're good. But it's that when we believe we take that next step. That we hear and we come to believe. That we become the witness. That we become the disciple so that we may share it with others so that others may come to believe. Because it's always an invitation, not simply into saying the right thing, not simply into doing the right thing, but to living a life devoted to our risen Savior, so that we may live in Christ together. That we may be a community of believers caring for one another, joining together in God's love and God's grace, so that we may be united. Not just for our own sake, so that we can believe but so that we can in turn help others come to believe. Not just, and I don't say this lightly, not just that Jesus is the Son of God. And this isn't to downplay the role of Christ at all. But often we think that the belief is simply knowing it and we're done. But for me, if we come to believe in Christ as our risen Savior, it means that we come into living a life in Christ, in which we want to be more like Christ, which means that we live like Christ and we love like Christ because we have shared in his death and we share his resurrection. That because we know we are forgiven we live a life that will help others to know that they are forgiven. When we come to believe we come to Christ so that we may empty ourselves and let him fill us up so that we may help others come to believe.

And I think that's an important part of how we believe, because often we let it become some sort of small thing. And we let it become almost that we're looking for catchphrases or we're looking for the right words to set us free. But I think the truth is that we come to believe because we feel it in our hearts. That if we are going to live as those who have shared in Christ's resurrection, that we have found our place, that we are welcomed into God's house, that part of that belief is that it's something to be shared with everyone. And for me, if that belief is not part of who we are, do we really believe in Christ as our Savior? If we aren't going to share the Good News in the same way that John wanted to share it with others in the Gospel, what are we doing? We need to have the same intention that John had in his letters of saying, look, I'm saying all of this because I want you to live, and I want you to be able to be free from sin and live a life in Christ. And I want you to be able to help others do the same. And we see it in that early Christian community in Acts, that in Acts, they all came together because they believed in a life in Christ. But it wasn't just something they held in their heads, but it was a way to live. It was a way to love. It was a way to share. If they were going to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, they couldn't just hold it as something that they knew but something that they lived. That became who they were and not just what they thought. It can't just be the words on our lips, because if we say it but don't do it, do we really believe? If we speak it but we don't

feel it, do we believe? If we proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God who came to free us so that we may find life eternal and live a life free from sin, but we don't extend that grace to others, do we truly believe it?

And so, my challenge to you this Easter, as we reflect upon our faith in our risen Savior, is how can we live in Christ more deeply and more fully? How can we live in him more completely? And I hope that we can think about that every day. And that the more that we discover about ourselves, the more that we can give to God. And that the more we can give to God of ourselves, the more God will give to us. So that, together, as we have come to believe, that we may help others come to believe. So that we may share in that joy and that joy may be complete. That we may share our faith with others in our risen Savior. And in our lives, reflect what we have come to believe, so that we may show the love, the mercy, the grace, and the life that we receive from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: We are reluctant, O Author of Love, to set aside our hurt, our anger, our disappointment. Heal us with your tender touch, that we might be cleansed of all unclean thoughts, all schemes of revenge, all hope of vindictive retribution. Open our eyes to the power of love, shown to us in the unselfish sacrifice of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Faith Resurrected

Our series is *Faith Resurrected*, and each week's title is taken from the words of Christ as we explore what it means to serve a Risen Savior.

April 11th – *Come to Believe* - Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

April 18th – *You are Witnesses* – Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

April 25th – *Listen to My Voice* – Acts 4:5-12; 1 John 3:16-24; John 10:11-18

May 2nd – *Abide in Me* – Acts 8:26-40; 1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8

May 9th – *I Chose You* – Acts 10:44-48; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

May 16th – *Be Sanctified* – Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

May 23rd – *He Will Guide You* – Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison
Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins
Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Don Stewart	Bill Gilbert	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Trinity Powers
Lauren Stewart	Charlie Henderson	Family of Tom Shamhart	Family of John Millsap
Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable	Family of John Robey	Family of Wendell Kemper
Sage Martin	Family of Jerry Holsapple	Dalton McFarland	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Family of Mary White	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Donna Graham
Kevin Drum	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Kim Hennes	

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