

Sermon

Is it True?

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Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

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Have you ever gotten into a discussion with a non-believer about the facts? About how is God real and how could this be and how could that be if indeed God is real? I certainly have and it is usually a no win situation. Just like Pilot and the crowd who insisted Jesus be crucified, no matter how hard you try to reason, it is a futile effort.

Futile because God does not exist in that environment. God is not restricted to the confines of scientific definitions – God is not limited by our definition of time, our definition of matter or physicality, our definition of space. Scientific definitions require parameters, and nothing is real that cannot be confirmed with data that backs up what the scientific definitions require. That's why when COVID showed up so many people doubted because there was no time to develop a scientific process that we humans are comfortable with before we determine that a treatment or prevention truly works. Science plays a critical role in our daily lives – when we turn a switch, lights go on, when we turn a key, our car starts, when we need a new heart, a new one can be implanted and beat from one person to another. Amazing things that just 150 years ago would have seemed impossible. Fascinating, critical and a completely useless approach when we try to come to terms with this day, Easter Sunday, within our faith – when we try to understand the process of death to life for our risen Lord.

So all those arguments and discussions regarding this day would prove useless for us both – for the believer and the scientist. They will never be convinced it is true and we will never be convinced it is not. Right?

So my question for you is a short one with a complex answer...Is it true? Is it true that God lives and gives us life? Is it true that God not only established a routine, what we call the laws of nature, but that one day God broke the routine and somehow raised Jesus from the dead? Is it true that something so extraordinary happened on that morning that we can only rebuild our lives on its foundation? Is it true?

These are tough questions and if you ask me, Easter is not a day for beginners but is more like the PhD version of our faith. The Sermon on the Mount with all its beautiful promises of faith- Jesus' earthly ministry – healing the sick, the blind and the lame and even bringing Lazarus back to life – these teachings of love and compassion – of learning how to live in community with one another – those are the undergrad courses. They are critically important and help us all to appreciate what God's intention was for us through Jesus' ministry. But then we come to this week, Holy Week, and the master class begins. The stories of violence, political persecution, suffering, humiliation and murder. For me, this week is the hardest of all weeks in our Christian calendar for me. Walking through the Passion Story is so deeply painful and reveals the darkest parts of our existence. And then today, we turn that proverbial corner and the stone is rolled away. The tomb is empty. Proclamation begins immediately. And we are left thumbing through our text books thinking we must have missed a chapter. How can this be?

So I ask you again...Is it true? Doubt or wonder or even a genuine curiosity in the resurrection does not indicate a lack of belief. Quite the contrary – it defines us as a people who do not need pages of data to understand. Limiting ourselves to only realities we can completely understand and delineate is likely too limited to reveal God to us. So we say without apology or hesitation: what we proclaim at Easter is too mighty to be encompassed by certainty, too wonderful to be found only within the borders of our imagination.

This question, these discussions focusing on the resurrection in the way it happened, the order in which it happened, the timing, the details is of course an important comprehension for us but as believers we just don't need to spend that much time on this single event for the simple reason we know that God continues to be concerned about our world and our lives today...God continues to speak today through our world right now.

What we say at Easter time is something we emphasize frequently in our lives – that our understanding of God cannot be confined to factual definitions or things that we are 100% certain of. If we did then we would limit ourselves and our faith. It's like putting God in a box of human limitation – it's not even why as much as it's not possible.

Peter is talking to the Romans – “I truly understand God shows no partiality” – no doubt in that statement. I truly understand God shows no partiality. Do we? God shows no partiality...that God's love is for all people. 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace

by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem...and in Niagara Falls or “fill in the blank”. You see, we aren’t here to state facts – we are here because we inherently know. We were born knowing and we live doubting. There wouldn’t be someone to heal unless someone was sick – there wouldn’t be hungry to fed if all were fed. There wouldn’t be people to free if all lived in peace. Our world is filled with Good Friday moments...deeply sad, deeply disturbing moments. And yet...here we are celebrating, rejoicing – how can this be? Because we know God lives not because we were there, not because we have proof but because we feel it, we live it through deeds and promises that God delivers on day after day.

You know, God doesn’t break our hearts go give us pain, - our hearts are broken to pen them up to healing. Are you doubting today? That’s ok – are you broken today? That’s Ok. Are you a little lost – not any more.

Is it true? I’m 100% sure I do not know if this is exactly how it happened all those many years ago – but I am certain of this. God is Is it true? ...but it is...TRUTH!