

Believing in the Resurrection

Easter Sunday, Mark 16:1-8; Isaiah 25:6-9

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Sermon-in-a-Sentence: We can all “believe” in the Resurrection, even if we don’t fully understand it.

Children’s Sermon:

Today is Easter Sunday – the day we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus. Do you “**believe**” in the Resurrection?

OK, can you **explain** the resurrection to me? How did it happen? How did a dead body come back to life? What really happened?

How can you “believe” in the Resurrection if you don’t **understand** it, and can’t **explain** what it means, or what really happened?

That’s not unusual, actually – to **believe** in something that you can’t really **explain**. I believe in the Resurrection. I believe that Jesus is still with us, and will always be with us, and continues to lead us in the Way of Love. But I can’t explain what actually happened at the Resurrection -- how a dead body came back to life after 3 days. How someone who was born 2,000 years ago, is still with us!

How many of you believe that the force of God created our world, our universe, and our planet Earth? Can you explain to me how that happened, or when? How can you **believe** in something that you can’t explain, that you don’t really understand? I believe that God was the force that created our world. But can I explain it? How it all happened? Nope.

There are some things in our world that are bigger than us. Bigger than our brains.

God is way bigger than our brains. We will never fully understand all that God **is**, or all that God has **done**, or all that God is **doing**. We will never fully understand all that **Jesus is**. Or all that Jesus has **done**. Or all that Jesus is still **doing**.

But we can still **believe**.

As I’ve mentioned before, the word “believing” that’s used in the Bible, is not just about agreeing that something’s factually true. It’s about “**giving ourselves to**” whatever we “believe in”. Even if we don’t fully understand everything about Jesus or the Resurrection, we can still “**give ourselves to**” Jesus and “**give ourselves**” to the Resurrection. And do the best we can to understand and follow the Jesus’ Way of Love.

Are you willing to “**believe in**” and “**give yourself to**” the **Resurrection**, even if you may never be able to fully **explain** it or even **understand** it?

Yeah! That’s what **Easter** is really about!

Adult Sermon:

In liturgical year B, on Easter Sunday, we have the choice of two Gospel readings, both about the Resurrection – the story from John’s Gospel, or the story from Mark’s Gospel. There are several significant differences in these two versions. I picked Mark’s version for our reading, which is the shortest and simplest of the two.

In Mark’s version, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, three women (the guys were all still hiding out of fear), go to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body.

But in John’s version, it’s only Mary Magdalene who goes to the tomb. The other Mary and Salome are never mentioned.

In both versions, when the women, or woman arrive, the stone door had already been rolled away.

In Mark’s version, the three women actually enter the tomb and see a young man dressed in a white robe sitting in the tomb; and it scares them. The young man tells the women to go tell the disciples that Jesus is risen and will meet them in Galilee.

In John’s version, Mary Magdalene, who is alone, doesn’t even enter the tomb and doesn’t see a young man in a white robe. She simply sees that the stone door has been removed.

In Mark’s version, the three women were so frightened, after seeing the young man dressed in white in the tomb they ran away, went back home and didn’t say **anything** to **anyone**.

In John’s version, after seeing the stone door removed, Mary Magdalene runs back to where Peter and John were and tells them someone has stolen Jesus’ body. Peter and John then come and enter the tomb, and see the linens Jesus had been wrapped in, lying in the tomb, and they believe he had been resurrected. And they go back home.

But Mary Magdalene stays outside the tomb, and is weeping. And when she looks into the tomb she sees **two** angels, not just one. And they ask her, why is she weeping. And Mary says it’s because someone had stolen Jesus’ body. And then Mary turns around and sees a man standing nearby, who she assumes is a gardener. But it turns out to be Jesus. And Jesus sends her to tell the disciples that he is risen and will ascend to his Father and God and to their Father and God. He doesn’t mention meeting the disciples in Galilee.

Jesus never shows up in **Mark’s** version.

So which version is true? Mark’s or John’s? And the other two Gospels, Luke and Matthew also have significantly different versions.

Why would the **early Church leaders** put four different versions of the Resurrection story in the same Bible? Why not just pick the best? Or the one they thought was most accurate?

As you know, the Gospels were written between 30 and 100 years after the actual resurrection. The stories had been passed on many times by many people, over many years. The early church leaders, who brought the four different versions together in our Holy Scripture, were obviously not focused on **“factual accuracy”**. So what *were* they focused on? I think it was more about **“spiritual experiences”** of Jesus and the resurrection.

Our “spiritual experiences” are always very different. And it’s not ever easy to share our “spiritual experiences;” to put them into words. We have to find good metaphors and symbols and stories that help reveal the deeper truth that we’ve actually experienced.

Our Gospel stories of the resurrection are about the earliest Christians, the earliest followers of Jesus, trying to share and communicate their extraordinary experiences of the Resurrection. The people who passed on the stories probably emphasized and focused on the parts of the stories that most resonated with their own “spiritual experience” of the risen Christ.

For me, the bottom line, the essence of the Resurrection is that Jesus, that God **is still with us**. Now, 2,000 years later. Guiding, comforting, inspiring, challenging us to live out the Jesus Way of Love in our own world and context.

How we experience the “resurrection” will depend upon our own life experiences, the lenses that we look through. Our experiences and stories will never be exactly the same. But, we are celebrating and following the **same** Jesus, the **same** God to the best of our understanding and our ability.

That’s why we are here. Especially on Easter Sunday. So that we can all reach out to and connect with, on a deep **spiritual** level, our God, and our risen Jesus. The one who is still alive, still real, who we are still able to connect with on a deep spiritual basis. The one who shows and models for us the Way of Love. The one who promises always to be with us, forever, even in the mystery of eternal life.

Believing in Jesus, believing in the Risen Christ is not about getting all the **facts** right about Jesus and his resurrection, or deciding which version of the story we should choose to “believe.” It’s about **giving ourselves** to the Risen Christ and to the Way of Love that he modeled and still inspires in us.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen.

Amen.