

“Believing the Unbelievable”

Luke 24:1-12

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Easter

What is the most unbelievable thing that you ended up believing? I am talking about something so incredible, you were absolutely certain that it could not be true or could never happen. However, it was true or it did occur and you became a believer.

Forty years ago, did you think that man would walk on the moon? Ten years ago, did you believe it would be possible to send millions of words over a single strand of fiber optic cable in one second? At the beginning of the 1998 baseball season, did you predict that Roger Maris' home run record would be broken by two people? Two years ago, would you have thought that someone could win consecutive titles to the four most prestigious golf tournaments? What is the most unbelievable thing you ended up believing?

When I read the Easter story, I sense a lot of skepticism and cynicism. No one believed that Jesus rose from the dead, not even his closest followers. Evidently, it never occurred to Mary that first Easter morning that Jesus was alive. Instead, she thought his tomb was empty because someone had stolen his body. When Mary and the other women told the disciples about the empty tomb, they refused to believe and called their story an idle tale. The disciples actually insinuated that these women were insane. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus never dreamed their traveling companion was the risen Lord until he went into their home and broke bread with them. Then there was Thomas, the most vocal of the resurrection skeptics who declared, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” John 20:22.

Why was it so hard for these people to believe that Jesus was alive? **Common sense would not allow it.** They saw his lifeless body hanging on the cross and watched as it was taken down and prepared for burial. His death was so brutal and certain that it left no room for hope of an immediate resurrection. Maybe God would raise Jesus from the dead if and when others would be raised, but not before then, certainly not within hours of his painful death.

There may have been another reason the disciples could not believe Jesus was alive. **It was too good to be true.** This would be the greatest news that they could hear and the best gift they could be given. So good was it that they could not and would not get their hopes up. They had been through enough pain that weekend. They did not need to add to it by acting like fools.

It was true, though, wasn't it? He was alive and his appearances removed all doubts. How thrilling to read that one by one these skeptics turned into believers and to see how their lives were changed. What a difference His resurrection made!

**What is the message of Easter for us today?** I believe it is this. It is time to change our way of thinking. It is time to quit being held hostage to the world's limited way of thinking. It is time to quit saying, “That's impossible,” and start saying, “with God, all things are possible.”

**What does this mean for you?** Perhaps it means it is time for you to believe that you can get rid of that inferiority complex and replace it with confidence and pride. It is time for you to believe that you can overcome bad habits and conquer old addictions. It is time for you to believe that you can go back to school and learn new skills. It is time for you to believe that you can manage your resources better and get out from under an accumulating debt. It is time for you to believe that you can make changes in your lifestyle and improve your health.

It is time for you to believe that you can be forgiven of your sins and released from guilt and shame. It is time for you to believe you can forgive others and let go of that destructive anger.

It is time for you to believe that you can get out of an abusive relationship and make it on your own. It is time for you to believe that you can go back home and repair fractured relationships.

It is time for you to believe that you can be a bold witness for Christ and make a difference in this world. It is time for you to believe that you can break down racial and social barriers and embrace people who are different. It is time for you to believe that your words advocating justice, compassion and reconciliation can be heard and will help.

It is time for you to believe that you can live and laugh again after your heart has been broken. It is time for you to believe that if you can live with dignity and hope, you can die that way, too.

It is time to believe that Easter is more than a story and Jesus is more than a legend. It is time to believe the unbelievable and give this risen Lord your heart and hand. I hope you will do it today. What a difference it will make!