

April 16 Sermon – Yeah...um...doubtful!

A man wakes up one morning and prepares for his day. He thinks about his normal routine. “Normal,” he thinks, “well there’s a confusing thought.” His “normal” routine for the time HAD been traveling to and fro with his teacher and friend, helping others learn how to be disciples of God. However, three days earlier, this man’s life and his idea of “normal” had been turned upside when his teacher and friend had been viciously condemned to and put to death in an incredibly public setting. Now, three days later, this man was beginning to think about what his new normal would be and about how he and his friends, the other followers of their teacher, could begin healing and rebuilding themselves emotionally.

By now, I’m sure you’ve figured out which man I’m talking about. Usually, when we think about Thomas, we refer to him by his nickname, Doubting Thomas. It’s understandable. Thomas had been a fierce believer of Jesus. When Jesus wanted to go see Lazarus, Thomas rallied the other disciples to go with him for fear that something would happen to Jesus in Judea. At the Last Supper, it was Thomas who asked the question about how to know the way to God. So, when Thomas saw what happened to someone he held in such high regard, it had to have shattered his world. It must have taken him those three days to process and fully believe that what he’d seen had actually happened rather than be a horrible nightmare, so when the disciples came running toward him telling him that Jesus was alive, he had to think they were crazy. Sure, they’d all dreamed for it to be true, but it couldn’t have actually happened. In more modern terminology, his response might have been something along the lines of “Yeah...um...doubtful!”



Throughout the world, there are hundreds of places so breathtaking that they could be deemed impossible to believe. From the Grand Canyon to Mount Everest, the natural wonders around the world are often described as incredible, impossible to capture with a photo, and more often, God's creations. Several years ago, I was able to visit Machu Picchu with a group of students. The meticulous nature of how the sundials and buildings were built was incredible and represented perfect science long before the idea of science was anything like what we think of now. Forever, the world was thought to be flat. When the idea was proposed that it was round, this idea was dismissed as impossible. Why? Because they couldn't see it.

There are so many things we can't see but can feel: nervous butterflies in our stomachs, pride, the wind. Just because we can't see it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Has anyone ever seen the movie *The Santa Clause* with Tim Allen. In *The Santa Clause 2* (Yes, I realize I'm referencing Christmas during the Easter season. Please don't blame this week's upcoming snow on me.), Santa's son tells the potential Mrs. Clause a profound truth. "Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing." While this is used in the context to prove the existence of Santa Clause (who I must say DOES exist!), there's an important truth to remember here. Some of the best things in life are those we can't see, and that idea of believing without seeing offers us a lesson about how we can turn doubt into much more.

You see, Thomas' story serves an important lesson about the power of belief after moments of doubt, about the power of believing in others. Think about it. There are countless moments in history when initial doubt combined with hard work and lessons from others yielded unimaginable results. An escaped slave named Harriet



Tubman helps design a system to help other slaves find their way to freedom. Two brothers with the last name of Wright analyze the way birds fly and dream of inventing a way that they themselves could fly. A man named Louis Pasteur theorizes that diseases might come from something other than evil spirits. A woman named Susan becomes instrumental in the women's suffrage movement after being denied the right the vote. In all of these cases, what must have seemed like an impossible task at the beginning yielded a drive to succeed that changed the world. Thomas was no different. There are accounts that after the ascension, Thomas traveled to India where he would preach about Jesus and baptize families before his death. He is actually the patron saint of India.

Bringing this idea closer to home, many of us remember the shock when we found out that Whitney Cerak, believed to have been killed in a horrible car accident, was found to be alive. An unbelievable miracle of itself, the true beauty of this event came to be the relationship between Cerak family and Laura Van Ryn's family. While coping with the realization that their believed-to-be alive daughter had actually died, the Van Ryn family fully embraced the shock the Cereaks had to be feeling. The two families became closer than you would ever imagine, turning the impossible into hope and the believable.

Believing without seeing will almost never be easy. Doubt is all around us. That doesn't mean, however, that believing is impossible. French philosopher Pierre Abelard once said, "The beginning of wisdom is found is doubting. By doubting, we come to the question, and by seeking, we may come to the truth." Just like the natural wonders of the world, just like the historical events that seemed like they could never happen, just



like getting through the most impossible moments in our lives that seem unimaginable, moving through the doubt and into the believable can make us stronger than we could ever imagine. It can move us from yeah...um...doubtful to yeah...um...absolutely. To this I say, and ask you to join me, thank you, God, for the many ways you still speak to us.

