

Easter Sunday
March 27, 2016
Rev. Diane-Monti-Catania

Sermon – “Unbelievable”

Welcome my brothers and sisters in Christ. I am glad that you are here today to hear the resurrection story.

I hope that you will be inspired by our gathering to take the good news of Christ out into a troubled world.

I pray that God’s holy spirit will find a place to rest in your heart and that you will leave this Easter service transformed, different, empowered.

Everything today is about resurrection-the music, the prayers, the scripture.

Resurrection, however, is one of the primary areas of doubt among Christians –

I often hear “I want to believe, but I just can’t wrap my head around this resurrection story.”

Perhaps you feel that way.

Maybe you are here today hoping to gain a greater understanding of what this ancient Easter story means in your life today.

Maybe you are here seeking the light that is promised-hoping to dissipate some of the darkness in your life.

Maybe you are here to fill up your spiritual tank to sustain you through the months ahead.

Maybe you are here to thank God for being so wonderful, so amazing, so generous, and so loving.

Maybe you are here seeking a type of resurrection yourself.

Whatever brings you here, please know that you are welcome.

Resurrection is at the heart of our faith – not just the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but new life springing from death over and over again.

Today’s story focuses on the physical death and resurrection of Jesus but what of other rebirths?

Resurrection is all around us.

Think of the many people who offer new life to their neighbors through service, welcome, generosity, compassion, solidarity, dignity and love.

If we only think of the resurrection as a one-time event-centuries old, it has no real value for us.

But, when it becomes a reality that infiltrates our lives and our beings, it transforms us into those whose every thought, word, action, value and attitude celebrates and releases life into our world.

This is the beauty of scripture.

It can speak to you wherever you are.

Whether you are a small child waiting to get back to your Easter basket or an elderly person daydreaming of Easters past where family and friends were gathered, today's gospel has something for you.

One author points out that the three disciples in John's gospel, Mary, Simon Peter and the other disciple represent the different ways that we approach our faith.

One disciple sees the grave clothes neatly folded and believes.

One disciple sees the same thing and there is no indication that he believes anything.

One is surprised into believing by hearing the sound of her name.

In each of these we find ourselves at one time or another.

John leaves room for each of us -- for one who sees and believes, another who sees and leaves uncertain, and one who needs to hear her own name.

Faith is both a decision and a journey.

You can decide at any moment to believe the gospel stories.

You can make a commitment whenever you choose to embrace Christianity as your religion – your value system, your moral compass.

You can turn your heart to God, who is always waiting for you.

Once you make those decisions your life becomes a journey of faith – a journey toward God.

Everything you do, every experience you have takes on new meaning when it is seen through the eyes of belief.

A birth becomes a miracle-a gift from God;

death becomes passage to eternal life with God;

breath becomes spirit and you find peace.

My friends, we all inhabit tombs of fear and doubt – dark places where we tremble and shudder, worrying about the future, about terrorists, about climate change, about our retirement funds, about whether we can afford to feed our children, about whether our children will live.

The risen Christ calls us out of those tombs into the garden of life.

When we allow resurrection to happen – when we avail ourselves of God’s Holy Spirit we are born anew.

At this time of year we watch the earth rebloom, bringing new life out of winter’s darkness.

We see the flowers bud and feel the warmth of the sun’s rays late into the day.

Nature provides a welcome metaphor for the renewal of our own spirits – our own lives.

We too, are granted the opportunity to come alive, to move out of our own dark places into God’s light.

We are invited to life in the garden.

So here you are, listening to the familiar Easter story and perhaps wondering what brought you here.

I would say that God brought you here.

God brought you here today to wrest you out of your tombs and into God’s light.

God brought you here today to ask you to pay attention to the message of God’s risen son.

God brought you here today to start you on a journey of faith guaranteed to transform your life.

God brought you here today to remind you that you are beloved; you are blessed; you are holy and you are God’s.

God brought you here to sow seeds of faith – tend to them carefully—allow them to grow.

Come into the garden where you are most welcome!