

WGUMC Easter Sunday March 31, 2013
"Believe It or Not" Luke 24:1-12

Easter is a story that is always needing to be translated into different languages and different cultures. So now that I've lived in geek central for almost two years, I think I'll try my hand at Easter a lá Silicon Valley. I was a bit of a science nerd myself growing up. And I still read the science news. Last year, I was intrigued by the discovery of the Higgs boson. Maybe you've heard of it. Probably you don't understand it. Neither do I, but I do know that physicists had been looking for it for a long time. Back in the '60's, Peter Higgs and others predicted it. Fifty years later, it only took a \$10 billion particle accelerator and 6,000 physicists working together in teams to find it. The Higgs boson is exciting to me because it appears to explain where all the matter in the universe came from. Hence its nickname: the God Particle.

As much as I love science, I love the church even more. And doesn't it seem that every time physics scores a hit, faith

in God takes one? I know plenty of science-minded folk who think that much of Christian faith is pure fantasy. For them, the resurrection story would surely fall into that category.

But on Easter morning, even some of the disciples thought so. The women came back from the tomb saying that they had heard Jesus had risen from the dead, "but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." [Luke 24:11] I don't think we can fault skeptics today for not believing something that Jesus' closest friends found unbelievable.

But we can challenge them. I, for one, reject the notion that as science advances, faith must retreat. In fact, as I read more and more about new discoveries in science, I'm finding that it's becoming easier for me to believe in the discoveries of faith. It's ironic, but as scientists keep doing things that we used to think were impossible, what God is doing is becoming a lot more plausible.

Stay with me while I try to explain. Hundreds of years ago, vaccines to prevent diseases and antibiotics to cure them were unbelievable. Putting a man on the moon was inconceivable. Yet we put a stop to polio, thanks to Jonas Salk and Armstrong did his moon walk. Considering just the wonders we have lived to see, these days and in this valley, we're a lot more hesitant to say that something is impossible.

Of course, putting a man on the moon doesn't quite compare to raising one from the dead. But biologists are finding new ways to raise up new life all the time. Daily they are doing the impossible. Recently, I read about some Russian scientists who took fruit tissue from plants that had been buried deep in the Siberian permafrost for 30,000 years and regenerated an extinct species, complete with flowers and fertile seeds. Makes you wonder what's next: resurrecting woolly mammoths? We can't do whole people, but tissue

engineers are using 3-D printers to build living tissue and one day, they will create fully functioning organs out of stem cells.

Now why am I telling you this? Because as science continues to break through, some old distinctions are beginning to break down. That radical separation between life and death, between survival and extinction, is beginning to blur. And so, could it be that, in this incredible new world we live in, the resurrection is looking more believable every day?

It seems to me that now is a good time for those of us who live and work in Silicon Valley to take another look at the Easter story. I grant you that, on the surface, there isn't much evidence for the truth of it. An empty tomb is just that: empty. It doesn't prove a thing. The absence of a body is no better. If this is all we've got, then there's no way to prove that the resurrection ever happened. To make matters worse, Jesus is only going to rise once, so the resurrection is unrepeatable. In strictly scientific terms, that means it is unverifiable.

So, there's no evidence and no proof, but that doesn't mean that there is no truth. There is, in fact, a way to test the truth of the resurrection. When you think about it, the Big Bang is also unrepeatable. But the theory can be tested. You take your theory and think through what should have happened if it were true and compare that with what has happened. If you have a match, you have some truth ready for further testing.

Now apply that same principle to the resurrection. Jesus said to his disciples: "In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live." [John 14:19] We have a cause (because I live) and an effect (you also will live.) And that suggests to me that the real test of the resurrection is not whether anyone saw it (no one saw the Big Bang) but whether anyone can live it. Only if his followers are living in Christ can we believe that Christ is living, that the resurrection is for real.

So we put the resurrection to the test by looking for people whose life and whose love can only be explained if Christ rose from the dead. And you don't have to go looking beyond this church to find them. I see plenty of folk right here living the new life in Christ. I see five adult Bible studies meeting each week to practice new life. I see people struggling through personal crisis and learning to trust in the promise. I see people bravely living with pain and still being able to give God praise. I see people fighting cancer and deepening their faith.

And along with these soul projects, I see lots of service projects. I see 55 folk planning to go to Mexico this summer to build houses and to build hope. I see our youth group going to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota to repair homes and restore lives. And I see disciples giving up their Saturdays to change the world right here in Willow Glen.

Just look at them. And then look at you. For when it comes to the resurrection, when it comes to whether or not

Christ is alive and well in the world today, you are the only evidence the church will ever have, and the only evidence it will ever need. "Because I live, you also will live."

Now I may not sway many skeptics today. And I don't want you to believe what is unbelievable. I just want you to remain open to all that is possible. And while I may be excited about the latest advances in science, I can't tell you how much I am anticipating your latest advances in spirit.

So Silicon Valley, I've given you an Easter story for your head, but I do pray that you will take it to your heart and let it live there. If you do, I believe that you can be the truth of the resurrection that someone needs to hear today. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!