



“Resurrection – is it just something we WANT to believe”

John 20:1-31

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Sermon audio and text available at www.waitaraanglican.com.au

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I WANT to believe

When I was 11 years old, scientific evidence came out that Apples were bad for you. There's cyanide in the seeds and some other scientific stuff! Well, that was enough for me not to eat my apple for lunch. Because I didn't like apples!

When I was later told as a child that bananas could also be bad for your health, I was deeply disappointed. And I ignored it! Because, you see, I like bananas! And no matter what scientific evidence said to me, I was not going to stop eating bananas!

Sometimes we're told things that we WANT to believe. And so it's easy to believe. Sometimes we're told things we DON'T want to believe, and it's hard to believe or we just don't believe.

Doubt is all around us. What we believe strongly, someone else may not believe at all. Just ask a few Christians what they think about Evolution and the Big Bang Theory and you'll get lots of different ideas on what people **believe** and **think**.

For other things, we are more easily lead to believe. Do you believe Caesar Augustus existed? Do you believe the earth is flat or spherical? Do you believe Julia Gillard is our Prime Minister?

No matter what we WANT to believe, sometimes things are just true. Sometimes we don't **want** to believe something is true. But it is. Some don't want to believe Ms Gillard is our Prime Minister. Others don't want to believe that Mr Abbot has a chance of being our next one!

Confusion. Belief. Doubt

On that first Easter morning, John 20 tells us that Jesus rose from the dead. And people responded to differently to Jesus rising from the dead. There are three main responses we see here. There is **belief**. There is **confusion**. And there is **doubt**.

Mary Magdalene thought the body had been moved and was confused and upset because she could not find it.

Peter and John run to the tomb and they saw, and believed that he had risen. Even though they did not completely understand.

Then Jesus appears to Mary and she believes.

Then Jesus appears to the disciples and they believe!

Then Thomas hears about it, but he doubts. Verse 25

So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later, Jesus appears again, this time in front of Thomas. Verse 26:

Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **27**Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Some are confused. Some believe straight away. Others doubt and will only believe when they SEE. There is confusion. There is belief. There is doubt.

III – Have you ever got a credit card statement, opened it up and said: "I CANNOT BELIEVE THIS!" And you go through it carefully and release that you DID spend all that money this month!? Because there it is right in front of you. And you investigate it and despite your doubts, unfortunately, it's correct! Even though you don't like it!

When it comes to Easter morning, I think all three of these responses are put before us in John 20 because they are **honest** responses.

It's an honest response to be were confused. Because if you go to a grave and the body is gone, it would be confusing. You wouldn't just say: "Oh, he must be alive and walked out!" You would probably think: "Oh, they've moved him. But where?!"

And instant belief without seeing the body is also honest, because no doubt, Peter and John WANTED to believe he had risen.

And of course you would expect people to believe when they see the evidence right in front of them. The disciples see Jesus right there. And they believe.

But doubt I also an honest response. What Thomas is being asked to believe is ridiculous. Because dead men don't rise!

WHY does it matter?

So why do we believe today? And why does it matter? Verse 30:

30*Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31***But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

These things are written for us that we may believe. That we may hear the eyewitness accounts, that we can study the history books, and look at the evidence, and come to understand and believe an objective truth. That Jesus really **did** live on this earth, that he performed miracles, and that he died and rose again.

But why does it matter?

If I told you I had a cup of coffee this morning, you would probably believe me. Without evidence. But if I told you I had 12 cups of coffee this morning, while I was hang gliding off the roof of Westfield, you **may not** believe. You may doubt. You may ask for evidence. Because it's extraordinary. It's not expected. And you may even just call me an idiot and walk away. But in the end, it doesn't really matter. You can ignore my statement because it doesn't really make a difference to your life, apart from the fact that you may think I'm a lunatic.

But if someone says to you: "I can raise anyone from the dead" then wouldn't we want to hear the evidence? Because THAT matters! Because THAT fact impacts our life. If someone can raise people from the dead, that changes our whole perspective on life and death.

We often spend a lot of time trying to convince people of the facts about the resurrection. But why? Because it matters! Jesus' death and resurrection isn't just something we can walk away from.

The resurrection says that death is not the end. Verse 31:

*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, **and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

These things are written so we will believe, and trust in Jesus, follow him, **and have eternal life with him.** We're being asked to consider this event because through this resurrection, Jesus claims to offer eternal life.

And I want to say just two things about how that affects us.

First, if you don't believe, have you considered how significant this is if it's true? That God has the power over life and death. That he's shown that death is not the end. That he offers eternal life to those who put their trust in Jesus. Rather than try to convince you that it happened, let me just ask you to consider, if it is true, how big an impact that would have on your life – to know that there is life after death? If you doubt, then like Thomas, it's worth a second look. It's worth investigation.

And to those who **do** believe, let me ask you this: "So what?"

What does it matter? If you believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus, has it changed your life? Has it changed **every day** of your life? How? If we believe and nothing for us changes, what's the point?

As we come to grasp the truth of today's celebration, the reality of life after death, we may be confused, or we may doubt, or we may believe. One response we do not see is the response of doing nothing. Mary doesn't see the empty tomb and then go back home to cook breakfast. Peter and John don't walk to the tomb. They RUN! The disciples didn't say "Hello Jesus!" They were **overjoyed**. Thomas didn't say: "Nup. That's rubbish." He said: "Show me!"

They responded because it matters.

Do you have a scar?

I have a few. Bike accident scar, age 8. Knife cut age 12. Operation scar age 14. Skin cancer scar age 36.

Every scar has a story doesn't it? But none mean as much as the scars of Jesus that Thomas saw.

The scars of Jesus hold a great truth. A truth supported by great evidence. A truth believed by billions of people around the world.

These scars of Jesus are the marks of your forgiveness through His death on the cross. These are scars that tell you that God loves you so much that he sent his only Son to die for you.

And these scars of Jesus say: "There is life after death". They are not the scars of a dead man. These are the scars of a living man. These are these scars that have impacted humanity more than any thing else ever has.

How do you respond, each day, to those scars of Jesus?

How WILL you respond?

Prayer...