

Sermon 5 10 18 Ascension

One of the difficulties for Christianity today, or I should say, for Christians today is all the fantastic stuff, all the frankly *unbelievable* stuff. Quite often, what people have difficulty understanding is that truth can be relative. What I believe to be true may not be what you believe to be true. People can have endless arguments about such things. They're basically silly arguments really, because it often has mainly to do with what people believe to be true. And truth is rarely an absolute.

I have faith in God. I believe in God. I believe in Jesus. I believe that Jesus loves me. I believe that Jesus loves you, ... whether you believe in him or not.

There are a lot of extraordinary things to believe in, in Christianity. And there's always the possibility of believing in something in a different way.

I believe in all the fantastic stuff, the unbelievable stuff. I believe Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Period. Dead as a doornail for three days and then alive again. No problem for me. There are those who believe that the various sightings of Jesus after his death established that he rose from the dead in a figurative or symbolic way, just as Shakespeare continues to "live," or as Abraham Lincoln "lives" because their impact can still be felt on our lives.

There are others who believe that Jesus may not have actually died – kinda tough to pull off having been speared in the side, but... People were known to have survived crucifixions. So those who believe that the resurrection is a hoax believe that the recorded sightings were of the Jesus who supposedly died and then he somehow disappeared from the scene after the sightings became no longer useful...

(He retired? I dunno.)

As for me, I think it probably goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway, I believe Christ rose from the dead – the really dead – period. I believe he appeared to Thomas – Doubting Thomas – and the guys who saw him on the road, and the rest of the disciples on various occasions – and then... well we come to our story from the Gospel of Luke today.

"Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy;"

I'll bet they did.

I love this painting. I don't know who painted it. In most paintings of this scene, we see the full body of Jesus and the lower part of his body is covered up with clouds or billowing robes. But here we see the disciples' faces (they look pretty amazed to me!) and the bottoms of Jesus' feet, possibly with holes in them, which makes sense to me.

And away he goes!

I love it. What's the point of believing in a religion, of believing in Christianity if we can explain it all away? Faith means you gotta have faith!

What's the point of believing in love if there's no mystery?

There's a lot of mystery in Christianity and I say, "YEAAAA!" Good. Why do we need to explain everything? Isn't it enough that we can explain most of the mysteries of the human body, of science and space? Where and how do we exercise our faith?

So I want to, I like to imagine Jesus elevating up into heaven, wherever heaven is – (and I don't need to know that either).

I don't need to explain the wonder of life on earth, how that spark began, and I don't need to have my husband prove or explain love to me in detail, and I don't need to dissect the love of God at all. I believe in it. That's what faith is all about. Faith is not foolish. Faith is a matter of faith.

May I recommend it. It is tremendously freeing. It is joyous. Just to believe.