



Incredulity on a Sunday?

Luke 24:36-52

Recently a friend sent me the following: A priest, a minister and a rabbit entered a clinic to donate blood. The nurse asked the rabbit, “What’s your blood type?” “I’m probably a Type O” answered the rabbit.

It took me a minute or two to realize why this was funny, and those I have passed it on to have had a similar response. Playing on the meaning of the word *typo* is clever and funny because we know that whenever we come across a *typo* it attracts our attention. We know that something is wrong and mentally try to correct it.

This weekend, millions across the world will celebrate Easter. People as far apart as Australia and Austria, London and Cape Town, Moscow and the Mississippi Delta will focus on the wonder and joy of the Resurrection. They will celebrate because they know that Easter is not a *typo*, not a mistake, but rather the spectacular fulfillment of God’s eternal purposes.

Yet that first Easter Sunday did not begin with wonder and joy. It began with incredulity, surprise, and utter amazement.

When Mary arrives at the tomb, she thinks the body of Jesus has been stolen. When Peter stares intently into the tomb, he cannot work out what is going on. He is surprised, perplexed. He can’t grasp the immensity of what has taken place. When the angels ask Mary why she is looking for the living among the dead, she is so taken aback she can’t put it all together.

Thomas emphatically and infamously responds to the Resurrection by saying, “Unless I see the holes in his hand and the wound in his side, I will not believe.”

In chapter 24 of Luke’s Gospel, two disciples walk alongside Jesus for most of Easter Sunday. They engage in a deep and lengthy conversation as they discuss what has taken place. Late that afternoon, at the end of their journey, the

disciples invite Jesus to join them for a meal. It is only when He takes the bread and gives thanks for it that they finally recognize who He is.

In the final section of Luke’s unfolding Easter account, Jesus appears to the disciples back in Jerusalem. The passage tells us they were “startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost” (Luke 24:37). When Jesus begins to interact with them, they begin to realize the amazing eternal significance of what has actually happened.

On that first Easter weekend, a major complicating factor for those present was that they were still coming to terms with the grief, pain, trauma, and debilitating events of the last few days. How could they begin to get their minds around all that had taken place? How could God possibly be involved in this awful event that launched what felt like the darkest days of their lives?

Then, on Easter Sunday morning, to add to the tears and confusion, the body of Christ was missing and some of the disciples were claiming Christ had risen from the dead. Amidst a multiplicity of questions, I imagine many were asking, “Why would they make up such a story? Why would they say that? Do they not realize the hurt and the confusion they are causing? What are they thinking?”

It is not surprising, therefore, that when Jesus appears to the disciples He says to them, “Peace be with you.” He was, of course, seeking to bring the supernatural peace of God into a situation of chaos, misunderstanding, and incredulity.

Jesus goes on to explain in considerable detail the eternal significance of the Resurrection and why His crucifixion and death played a central role in God’s redemptive purposes for humanity. The Resurrection is a powerful reminder that Christ faced the unbridled force of His Father’s judgment against sin in all of its enslaving, deceptive, and demeaning power. He did so with an infinite, incomprehensible love. And then He rose from the dead.

It is always worth remembering the significance of what took place that first Easter. The Easter story is not just an inspiring and

uplifting story. It is not simply a story of hope and a new beginning. It does not merely represent light after darkness.

It is not enough to say, “Now I don’t believe it literally. I don’t think there was a physical Resurrection. I believe the early Christians had a wonderful experience of the spirit of Christ living on in His teaching, and over the years the stories morphed into a physical Resurrection.” You might be comfortable with such a thought, but you will not have the reality of what took place.

It was not a metaphor that said to Thomas, “Put your hand in my side, look at the wounds in my hands.” It was not a parable that interacted with the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. Let us not mock God with metaphor or analogy, seeking to sidestep the transcendent or reducing the supernatural to a parable. Let us resist the temptation to make it less incredible than it actually was to suit our own convenience.

Easter is too important to be dismissed as a symbol, a metaphor, a typo. The Resurrection is life-giving and life-renewing. It takes us beyond information and emotion to transformation and intimacy with the risen Christ. It focuses on a real life-transforming relationship with the living God.

The greatest day in all of history began with an empty tomb and the disciples expressing incredulity. Doubts and misunderstanding dominated the early hours of that first Easter. But as the disciples and those around them began to grasp the immensity of the death and Resurrection, they also began to rejoice in the heartfelt, life-transforming certainty of the love of the Risen Christ.

I do trust you and your family have a spectacular Easter as you remember the light of His love and then live in the reality of the Resurrection.

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