

Eaglehawk Uniting Church
Sunday 27th April 2014
Merrill Cole



Bible Readings

John 20:19-31

Acts 2: 22-32

Peter 1: 3-9

There are currently shorts for a new TV show - "Believe"
If you haven't seen them, it's about someone with supernatural powers, a protector, and the 'baddies' wanting to get their hands on the one with the 'power'.

Sound familiar???

Easter Story is like this to a point, so are these sort of stories only 'Fairy Tales' ??



too good to be true?

For anyone who receives typical 'spam' emails - if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Here are a couple of the ones I've received lately...

- *I seek your indulgence to me relocate \$57.6million(USD)to your country, please reply me via this email if you are interested only - Chief Financial Officer.*

- *\$1 Million USD. Has been donated to you kindly contact the donator Mr. via personal email - Mail-Coordinator*

They sound very official, but we know from other people or authorities who monitor these sorts of emails, that the fact is 'they are too good to be true'.

Jesus resurrection was one of those things that also seemed too good to be true, too hard to believe. After all - everyone had seen him suffer so much on the cross (a terrible way to die). His body had been placed in the tomb and sealed - and would now be starting to decay !!!

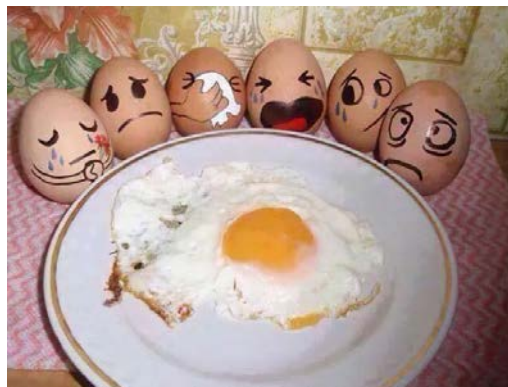
Read the story from - Mark 16: 9-14

⁹Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.¹⁰She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.¹² After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

[add in here as told in the John reading, the appearance to all except Thomas - and his refusal to believe]

¹⁴ Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he took them to task (upbraided them) for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

Thomas not the only one of the disciples that didn't believe until he saw the resurrected Jesus



If the story had ended without proof of Jesus resurrection, all of the disciples would have probably grieved the loss of a friend, and then gone back to their

previous work. No commitment to the new way of living that Jesus had taught them in the previous 3 years
No such thing as Christianity !!!!
No Living God;
Just a dead fried egg....

*References of 'BELIEVE'
in the 4 Gospels*

1. events / signs to promote belief	58
2. consequences of NOT believing	19
3. benefits / blessings of believing	39

In NRSV 'Believe' 115 time in the Gospels.

It hit me again that there was a reason that this theme came out of the readings today when the account of Thomas is being read from the Gospel of John.

Matthew - 7

Mark - 15

Luke - 9

Sub total of 31

John has the rest - do the maths - 84

I have collated those 115 references into 3 broad categories of reference

1. Events / signs to promote belief 58 times
 - Physical healing (blind, leprosy, lame, demons, raise from the dead)
 - Challenging common understanding - highest authority (man or heaven)
 - Identifying false prophets / prophesies - identity of the Messiah
 - Miracles that show God's mercy and grace - not self serving (on the cross - save yourself)
 - Fulfillment of prophesies - kingdom of God is near, Resurrection (rebuilding the temple in 3 days)
 - Intimate knowledge and testimony - the scriptures, other people

Also read again Acts 2: 22 & 32; 1 Peter 1: 3 & 8 - these are the signs for US to know that Jesus is the Messiah.

2. Consequences of NOT believing 19 times
 - No relationship with God (not abiding in);
 - No understanding of sin;

- Mute / unable to speak;
 - Refuse to listen;
 - Blind to God's glory;
 - Fail when tested / slow of heart / betrayal of others;
 - Wrath of God / Condemned to eternal death;
3. Benefits / blessings of believing 39 (most well known - John 3:16)
- Free from fear / joyful (worship & praise)
 - Nothing is impossible
 - Prayer requests granted / fulfillment of promises
 - LOVE / Relationship with God through Jesus / filled with the Spirit
 - Truly know right from wrong (live in the light)
 - Eternal life - never thirsty or hungry
 - Testify - words and action

But why Believe? In Anything??

If you Believe that the medicine your doctor prescribes will work - you take it

If you Believe that the road rules will keep you safe - don't go through a red light

If you Believe that something or someone is worth protecting (TV show) - risk our life

Any belief leads to a corresponding action.

I seem to keep coming back to the current community perspective of self sufficiency - financial, emotional, self importance. We fall into a selfish thinking, after everything to meet my needs, seeing others as not as important as ourselves. It's an empty nothing - a void that we are tempted to try and fill with more and more of the trivial



As Christians, our Belief is that Jesus is the incarnation of God. And is expressed in our actions - Care for others, fight for justice, acknowledgement of God with our praise & worship.

Let's join with Thomas, truly look and see a risen Jesus, and say: "My Lord, and my God". Amen.

RESOURCES

Alexander, P & D (editors), 2009. *The Lion Handbook to the Bible*. Oxford: Wilkinson House

Church of Scotland, *Starters for Sunday*.

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/19928/27_April_2014.pdf accessed April 2014

HarperOne, 2006. *The HarperCollins Study Bible, Revised Addition*. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers.

In The Toughest Of Times... There's Still Hope, Joy and Love! <http://www.lectionarysermons.com/Apr11-99.html> accessed April 2014

Jacobson, K. http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2092 accessed April 2014

Loader, W. <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/AActsEaster2.htm> accessed April 2014

Migliore, D., 2004. *Faith seeking understanding, 2nd edition*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Oremus Bible Browser. <http://bible.oremus.org> accessed April 2014

Prewer, B. *SERMON: BELIEVING IS SEEING*. <http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocA/29EAST2.htm> accessed April 2014

Pumpkin Cottage Ministry Resources. <http://www.lectionarystudies.com/easter1ae.html> accessed April 2014

Pumpkin Cottage Ministry Resources. <http://www.lectionarystudies.com/studyot/easter2aeot.html> accessed April 2014

Shauf, S. *Today's passage is part of Peter's sermon following the original, powerful experience of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost*. http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2041 accessed April 2014

Strauss, L. *The Pentecostal Preparation*. <https://bible.org/article/pentecostal-experience-study-acts-2> accessed April 2014

Wellspring of the Gospel 2007. http://www.wellsprings.org.uk/weekly_wellsprings/year_a/easter_02.htm accessed April 2014