

**Sermon: 2019/04/28 (2nd Sunday of Easter Day) - Acts 5:27-32;  
Psalm 118:14-29; Revelation 1:4-8; & John 20:19-31\_BTR**

[Invite children to the front.]

After having been resurrected, and shown Himself to the women in the cemetery-garden, Jesus continued to appear to His friends and family for forty days until He finally returned to Heaven: [Acts 1:3].

And we're commemorating those forty days now - the forty days of Easter.

And it is a *mysterious* time:

We aren't told very much in the Bible.

Like the forty days of temptation in the wilderness following the baptism.

There is definitely a meaningful "mirror-ring" there in the text.

And the detail about both periods is scanty; it's hard-to-come-by.

Like a jigsaw puzzle that we have to assemble from various different places, but some of the pieces are missing.

Now, *John* - who was there - tells us this morning about how Jesus appeared for the *first* time to the group as a whole:

the disciples were in a room together *and* - we're told, *specifically*, that - '[all] the doors were locked'.

Ok?

*All* of them.

Why?

Because the disciples were afraid of 'the temple police' who had arrested Jesus.

They were worried that the same thing could happen to them!

(That they might be crucified too: *Ouch!*)

*Then*, suddenly, Jesus came.

Just like that.

He didn't walk into the room;

He didn't climb through a window.

He was just...*there*.

(It was (another) miracle.) [Pause.]

Have you ever seen something like this?

It is an old fashioned toy; it is called the "Bird in a Cage Optical Illusion."

Here, instead of a bird in a cage, I've a picture of that room that the disciples were hiding in, and on the other side I've put a picture of the risen, alive-again -esus.

But if I wind and wind *and wind* this "toy" around and around, and then let it go - watch what happens:

What happened?

[Wait for response.]

*Right!*

It looked like - for a moment - that Jesus was actually *in* the room (with His disciples).

But it's a trick, isn't it?

Like when a magician or a ninja throws a gas pellet on the ground, and disappears or reappears in a cloud of smoke: the smoke *disguises* the fact that what the person is actually doing is using a trapdoor in the floor or swinging away on a cable.

Well, *John* didn't mention any "optical illusions," flashes of light or anything.

Jesus was just all-of-a-sudden standing in the room.

He was demonstrating the power of His new, transformed, *resurrected* body that God had given Him for everlasting life in the Kingdom.

Bodies that we can have too if we trust and obey the Lord.

Let's pray: Father God, ..., in Jesus' name, amen.

[Ask children to leave.]

Jesus showed Himself to His disciples to *prove* that He had beaten death; that He had *transcended* such a basic, brutish fact of human existence, which is that it ends.

And this was necessary for one reason only - it *wasn't* necessary to effect our atonement - for the 'repentance...and forgiveness of sins.' [Acts 5:31]

*That* was done on the Cross, when He offered Himself in our place to take the punishment for sin.

There was nothing else to add in that respect, which is why His last words as He hung (up) there were:

"It is finished." [Jn. 19:30]

Yes, it was; *objectively*.

And He could have ascended then and there.

*Woosh!* Off those rough, wooden beams and straight to Heaven (from the top of Calvary).

But though it was *in principle* true - access to God by sincere confession, trusting in Christ's death - did the Apostles *know* it?

*Subjectively* speaking?

Had this reality "*rooted*" itself in their hearts so much so that they would now rush out into the world to spread the message?

Hardly.

The resurrection appearances, then, were to do something important: to "*underline*" a point.

When He "*suddenly*" appeared in that room, therefore - as I was describing to the children - it was like that moment at your front door when you receive a delivery, and there's a form in triplicate to sign:

the FedEx guy tears off one sheet and hands you another - those tissuey pink or yellow copies from the back.

And taking them in hand makes it substantive that you are now responsible for the parcel at your feet.

One man, of course, was missing: Thomas - Thomas "*the Doubter.*" [Jn. 20:24]

He doesn't see Jesus "*delivering*" the "*parcel*" of proof for life-everlasting.

And so not having *experienced* Jesus with the other ten - not having hugged Him or shook His hand with astonished congratulations, which is like being handed the delivery paperwork, he just quite can't bring himself to believe what all the others now told him; their certainty didn't override his scepticism.

Scepticism, for course, which was well-founded: people don't come back after having been violently murdered.

His response, then, is to sneer at his friends; to scoff and roll his eyes incredulously.

And we might feel like that too about some of what we read in the Bible.

Isn't it just too good to be true?

Many - particularly "*The Young*" - have a hard time accepting what previous generations took for granted.

They question - like Thomas - whether the stories are "*tall tales*;" "*mythology.*"

And this especially applies to (the Book of) *Revelation*, (which some of us began to look at in Sunday School, and will continue to do so for the next five weeks).

The imagery here seems so...bizarre, so...*alien*:

there are many-headed beasts,

angels with trumpets,

evil spirits shaped like frogs.

*Really?! You think.*

*Please, give me a break.*

And many of us are embarrassed to own *Revelation*, to acknowledge its existence; its presence in the Canon.

Only "*fundamentalists*" and "*wack-jobs*" - *fanatics* - take this, the (very) last book of the Scriptures seriously.

It is for snake-handlers and small, backwoods Christians who "*ain't got no education.*"

Christians who've spent too long breathing in the fumes from surreptitious moonshine distilleries.

But if you are neglecting *Revelation*, you are missing out on something fantastic: For the author explains - *in detail* - what it is that Christians have to look forward to - and it is beautiful and exciting. And really, *really* "Good News."

Don't be put off, then, by the fact that he uses many cryptic symbols: yes, modern interpreters do need to be sort of "code-breakers" when they approach the book, but it is well worth the time and effort.

Furthermore, the greatest likelihood is that the man who wrote it was (actually) John the Evangelist, the "beloved Disciple," and he did so as a sequel - the second-part - to his gospel.

So why would you read just half of it?

Like stopping at the end of season seven of *Game of Thrones*: you might as well see it through to the end, right? In spite of all the nudity and sex.

(That's my (poor) excuse to Rebekah, anyhow.)

For too long we've allowed Hollywood and misguided enthusiasts to represent to the world John's final thoughts: he didn't have long to live.

And he was someone who knew the Savior intimately - in the flesh *and after the tomb!*

It was their unparalleled connection that explains why he was chosen to receive - *and transmit* - the visions of the "End Times."

It must, then, be important information for you and I to know.

"Information" that nourishes and nurtures:

that we need to hear to be properly prepared for the various eventualities that face us.

Let us take a moment to reflect.