I love to tell the story of Jesus and his love. I love to share the messages of the Scriptures. At times I think how can I come up with another message? But then the Holy Spirit gives me something out of nowhere. Thus comes this morning’s message.

The Resurrection message isn’t over in just a few weeks after Easter. The message is ongoing. In a Max Lucado book, “And The Angels Were Silent” a journey with Jesus on the final week of his life, the forward says, “Watch him walk angrily into the temple, wearily into Gethsemane, painfully up the Via Dolorosa,” and get this “powerfully out of the tomb.” “Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty power over his foes.”

Following Easter we are invited to follow the powerful Jesus into the daily routines of everyday living confronting the things of this earth. We might ponder WWJD? What would Jesus do? Is our faith relevant? Does it work? Does God care? Does he answer prayers?

We need to understand the message of the resurrection grabs at our heartstrings and offers us hope when things look hopeless. It offers us peace. It offers us assurances. It offers us promises. It offers us power through believing in the risen Christ to deal with our everyday living, our marriages, our work, our town time, our family, and even when we walk the valley of the shadow of death.

Yes, the women found the tomb empty. Yes, the angels said Christ had risen. But there were many skeptics those days. Think about that. The disciples doubted the women’s words that they had seen the risen Christ. Peter, when he looked into the tomb wasn’t sure, yet when John looked in, he became a believer. Two guys who were in the inner group with Jesus, heard the same teachings, saw the same miracles, one looked in and saw the tomb was empty wasn’t sure of what to make of it…the other
looked in and believed. How about the guys on the way to Emmaus. They weren’t sure who they were talking with, but when they reached their home, and their guest blessed and broke the bread right before their eyes, well they went from unbelievers to believers’.  

And this morning? A familiar story is about to unfold, for it is about Thomas and his doubts. We often relate to Peter but how many of us can relate to Thomas because sometimes we are the doubters. Sometimes we want to see, to touch, to hear the risen Christ. Back in my working days I remember working on one of our units and the president of the company asked me why it wasn’t completed yet. I told him we were missing a part. He called the engineer to the floor to see what was going on and he really didn’t have an explanation. The president said he understood they were missing a part, but the engineer assured him that was not the hold up. Well Mr. Beck, the president, who had a temper asked to see the part. The engineer hemmed and hawed. Mr. Beck with his Jewish accent in a loud voice so the whole plant, in fact the whole town of Waltham and beyond could hear him said, “I want to see that part. I want it right here in my hand.” Well, you can guess what happened. No part. I felt sorry for the engineer as Mr. Beck took him to the woodshed in front of lots of us workers.

Because Thomas wasn’t there when Jesus came to the disciples he didn’t believe. (And that’s another sermon for another time, how you miss out on the blessings when you miss gathering together.) When they told him they had seen the risen Lord he doubted. He wanted proof. He said, “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 it.” No amount of words, or pleading could change Thomas’ mind. He needed to see for himself.

How many times have you used the phrase “I doubt it?” Some of you baseball skeptics doubt if the Cubs will ever get into the World Series, much less win one. But we serious Cub fans aren’t thinking they can’t, we know that they will. When they deck Wrigley field in all those banners and the first pitch is thrown in the first
game of the World Series with the Cubs and whoever, maybe even my Boston Red Sox, we will make believers out of many of you. It may not be this year, but it is going to happen in my lifetime… maybe even while I am still your pastor.

We know the story of Thomas very well. We think, seeing is believing. The disciples doubted the women story of seeing Jesus. They doubted because, well because they had not seen him, had not touched him, had not heard his voice. And those Emmaus fellows were so blinded by their sorrow they did not recognize the one who was journeying with them. Even when they said some had seen the risen Jesus they doubted because things didn’t change. But more to the point, they had not seen him. There was no loud trumpet sound. No heavenly voices singing “He Lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today!” No! They had to take it at face value and believe that God can do anything, knowing that what he promises he will deliver. It took a breaking of the bread to remove their blinders.

So what does this have to do with us this morning? Well, many times Jesus told his disciples not to be doubters but to have faith. He even asked them from time to time when they doubted where is their faith. How about Peter walking on the water. The disciples doubted that Peter could do it. Peter doubted too, but when Jesus offered the invitation he exercised his faith and put one foot over the side onto the water, then the next, and there he was standing on the water. Jesus beckoned him to come and he moved toward Jesus but that smart fellow we all hate and try to avoid, brought about a strong wind that took Peter’s attention away from Jesus on to his situation and he no longer was walking on the water but was fighting to keep from drowning.

Faith is what we are all about. We have faith that what God says he can do, he will do. It’s as simple as that. **We have to believe.** And one of the most difficult things for the world to believe is that the women found the tomb empty and they also saw, heard and touched the risen Lord.

Have faith…believe… trust. Isn’t that the message of the Resurrection? We weren’t there. We didn’t hear the angel say he had risen. We didn’t see him like
Mary did. We weren’t in the Upper Room when he appeared to the disciples. We weren’t at the fish breakfast to eat with the risen Lord. No! God asks us to believe the message of the Resurrection through faith. Believe his son arose from the grave and lives forever with the saints to reign. He asks to believe that if he could do such a great thing like that, there isn’t anything he can’t do in our lives.

Yes, it’s a simple message. For some unbelievable. There are lots of Thomas’ in the world. There are lots of skeptics who at one time tried to prove Jesus did not die, therefore he never rose from the grave. They are the ones who want to see proof. They remind me of those skeptics at the cross who told Jesus do one more miracle and come down from that cross right now and we will believe. Hogwash! He could have called down the angels but they would not have believed him. You know that and so do I. There is a little of Thomas in all of us. We may believe some things but fail to believe others. How many of us love to see magic tricks but doubt what are eyes have seen or not seen?

That brings me to what inspired this message. The title comes from a plaque I have in my office that Linda Selinger gave me some time ago. I was thinking about this passage trying to think how can I bring something relevant from this passage when my eyes spotted that plaque. It reads, “Faith is not believing that God can—it’s knowing that He will.”

Many times Jesus told his disciples what was going to happen to him yet failed to believe him. Even the great Peter took him aside when he spoke about the suffering that was to come and said for him not to talk like that, for he and the disciples would protect him. When Jesus tried to explain it to them during the last supper they didn’t comprehend it all. And when Judas came to betray him, well, they all took off to save their own skin. And think about this…. when they laid Jesus in the tomb and those women went to the tomb 3 days later they did not expect to see the tomb empty and that Jesus had risen. They went to anoint his body. Did anyone believe he would rise again? It doesn’t look like it. Even though God was preparing a “Welcome Home Son” party in heaven with the angelic choir going
to sing and his favorite heavenly food being prepared by the best chefs in heaven, on earth there were the doubters. Even Pilate and the religious leaders didn’t believe it, but to make sure someone didn’t steal his body AND CLAIM HE HAD RISEN they placed guards at the tomb after sealing it with the seal of the Roman Empire.

So our faith begins at that tomb. Our faith isn’t believing that God can, but knowing he will.

You want examples? How about when God told Abraham he would be the father of thousands upon thousands of people and Abraham didn’t even have one child yet and he and Sarah were old. Though he and Sarah had their doubts, God delivered one day. God kept his promise and Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90. around 20 years since God made that promise. Abraham and Sarah may have remembered how they laughed when they heard the news about having a child and God said, “Is anything impossible with God?” No! for out of that one birth millions of followers have come forth.

While reading Max’s book while I was having work down on my car and it must have been one of those God things again. At least I think so. I began to read of a man from Germany who wanted to fly. The problem was he lived in the sixteenth century. “He was a dreamer born to soon” Max writes. What he wanted was impossible. What he did for a living will astound you. He made a career out of helping people overcome the impossible. He made artificial limbs, way back in the sixteenth century. But his mind was so entrenched on flying he worked hard trying to figure a way to fly. It took time but he began to design wings and when they were finished he took them to the Bavarian Alps for a test flight. He strapped them on, jumped off and guess what….he flew. Max exclaimed, “His heart raced. His friends applauded. And God rejoiced.” The up draft kept him aloft for just a few minutes, but he flew. It was a miracle. It didn’t take long before the news of his flight reached lots of people in this little town and beyond. The king wanted to see him fly. His bishop talked him into demonstrating this new thing, but because the king
was not a young man, and the bishop thought this would be a great thing for their
town and their church he asked him to do it near the river so more people could see
it. Excitement built in that town as everyone prepared for the big event. When the
day came, the bishop introduced the man to the king and he wished him well. The
man took his wings to the other end of the river and from a high place from which
he could jump, he strapped on his wings took a deep breath and jumped into the
sky. But the results weren’t the same. The air was silent. There were no up drafts
like before, and the man and his wings began a quick and rapid descent head first
into the river much to the dismay of the king, the bishop and the gasps of the towns
people. The next Sunday guess what the bishop’s sermon title was? You guessed
it…. “Man was not Meant to Fly.” He killed a dream. He killed the heart of a
dreamer. He not only discouraged a dreamer, he discouraged other dreamers too.
And by the way, it wasn’t long before that vibrant church started to decline until the
doors were closed for lack of interest. He doubted he could ever fly again. And
because of his unbelief he eventually died of a broken heart. His dreams and his
faith were shattered and he forgot faith is not believing what God can do, but
knowing what God will do.

Such a sad story. But folks, there are lots of people whose dreams are
shattered because they forget the message of the Resurrection. Because He lives we
can face tomorrow. Because He lives all fear is gone. Because he lives we can
dream our dreams and trust the one who brought forth his son who lives today. God
never promised us a smooth road to travel. He only promised he would always be
with us. David’s 23 Psalm helps us understand it better when he wrote, “Because
the Lord is my Shepherd I have everything I need….. and even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil for you are with me, thy rod
and thy staff, they comfort me. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in
the house of the Lord forever.”
A week goes by and Thomas has to live with his doubts. Who knows how many times the disciples spoke to him about seeing Jesus. He would not have any of it. He came back to the same thing….unless he touched his wounds he would not believe. It wasn’t just seeing him….he had to touch him….but not just touch him, but the nail holes in his hand, and that gash in his side where the soldier put his sword and the water and the blood mingled together as it drained from Jesus’ body. One week is a long time, especially for this disciple. But when Thomas joined the other disciples in the Upper Room a week later, with the doors locked, windows shut, Jesus came and stood among them, and John, who was there records the event as he writes, Jesus enters the room and says “Peace be with you!” 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.”

So yes, that sign I have in my office is helpful for us today. Think about it….Faith is not believing that God can” after all we have been told that he can. If we believe the things we read in Scripture climaxing with raising his son from the tomb, then we ought to know this one thing….we should believe in him knowing that not only that he can….but that he will.

So Jesus speaks to all us doubters when he concludes his remarks to Thomas, “Because you have seen me, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Those last words, that’s us, the ones who have not seen but are asked to have faith and believe.

The message for us this morning is simple….don’t doubt but believe. Oh, not just Jesus has risen and lives today. Believe that because he does there is nothing impossible for he or God to do in your life. Remember… Faith is not believing God can- IT’S KNOWING HE WILL!

God has proved his faithfulness over and over again from one generation to another. Read Hebrews chapter 11, the great faith chapter. It begins, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”
My friends, Christians are called to walk by faith. We don’t have all the answers. And because we believe we won’t get them all either. But when we walk by faith we can be assured the one who knows all the answers to our problems in life will give us what we need when we need it. He has asked us to follow him on a journey of faith down the path that leads to eternal life. Many twists and turns await the journeyer, many road blocks might pop up and you might need to take a side road or two, but if we walk in the light as Jesus is the light, no panic, for he will lead us home. And because he is the Good Shepherd he will watch over us all the way home.

Yes, I love to tell those stories of salvation, of healings, those stores of faith not only from the Scriptures but from hymn writers and from other writers whose faith journeys helps us to understand that the resurrected one still brings miracles into our lives, therefore no matter the circumstance, trust and obey for there’s no other way.

So may it be in my life today, and in all our lives day after day. Let’s be assured…Faith is not just believing God can, IT’S KNOWING HE WILL!