

Sermon: *This We Believe and Proclaim*
Text: *Luke 24:1 – 12*
Date: *April 4, 2010 AM*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

In June 1815, Napoleon and Wellington faced off across a battlefield near Waterloo, Belgium and anxious Brits awaited the outcome. The news would be transmitted across the British Channel using light signals. And finally, it came and the words spelled out, “*Wellington defeated ...*” and then, a dense fog rolled over the channel and an even denser fog fell over Great Britain. News spread quickly and soon, the entire country was in despair. But that’s not the end of the story, is it? Soon, the fog lifted and the message was sent again; it spelled out: “*Wellington defeated Napoleon.*” And suddenly, Britain’s despair was turned to joyous celebration. Napoleon had been defeated.^a

On Good Friday, two mortal enemies faced off across another battlefield. Good and evil, God and Satan met at a place called Golgotha, the place of the skull. That’s where a man named Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross. And suddenly, a thick darkness fell across the land. So, they took Him down, buried Him in a borrowed tomb, sealed it, and placed guards around it. And the “*Evening News*” proclaimed: “*Jesus defeated! Jesus defeated!*”

But that was Friday! Early on Sunday morning, Mary and the other women went out to anoint His body with burial spices. And when they arrived, they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty and two angels dressed in white. So, they ran back into town, to the place where the disciples had gathered,

and told them ... but nobody believed them. After all, the prevailing wisdom of the day is that you couldn't believe anything a woman told you anyway. And Luke even says their story sounded like "nonsense" to the disciples. So, Peter went out to the tomb to see for himself and found everything just as Mary had said. And Luke says: "He went away wondering to himself what had happened." And then, later that day, when the disciples were gathered behind closed doors, Jesus stepped into the room, showed them His hands and feet, and said: "Peace I give to you. Receive the Holy Spirit." And suddenly, the fog lifted and the morning news reported: "*Jesus defeated death, hell and the grave forever.*"

Now, that's an amazing story. And for some, it is so amazing that it is unbelievable. ***But the Easter story has always been about faith!*** Oh, some were privileged to be eye witnesses, but most were not! Jesus told Thomas: "You have seen and believed, but blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." That's you and me! We are those who "*believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord who ... on the third day rose from the dead.*" Yes, we believe "*in the resurrection of the dead.*" Faith, that's what this story is about.

And the Easter story is about proclamation! On that first Easter, everybody proclaimed the resurrection. The angels told Mary and the other women; the women told the disciples; and the disciples told Thomas! Everybody told the story of the stone that was rolled away and the tomb that was

found empty. And for nearly 2000 years, this has been the church's proclamation: Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed!

And so, that brings us back to two very basic questions: first, do you believe? And this first question is so vitally important that Paul said: "**If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is our faith.**"^b Do you believe? And the second question is equally important, because the eternal future of your family and friends depends on it and the question is: Who have you told? Have you passed on your faith to those around you?

Well, on Good Friday a few years ago, the nurses at an Alzheimer's facility decided to get the residents together and watch the epic movie, *Jesus of Nazareth*. And for hours, they all sat glued to the screen, watching the great scenes of Jesus' life play out. Then, they came to that wonderful scene when Mary busted into the room and said: "*He's alive! I saw Him, I tell you. He's alive!*" And of course, the disciples all looked at her like she was crazy and she said: "*You don't believe me ... you don't believe me.*" And that's when Miss Esther spoke up in the back of the room and said: "*That's okay, honey. We believe you; don't we, guys?*"^c

^a www.sermonillustrations.com

^b I Corinthians 15:14 NIV

^c www.sermonillustrations.com