

“Too Good to be True”
Sermon Series: Tell me Something Good
Preached by Rev. Ridgley Beckett
April 12, 2026

“Blessed are those who have not seen, but have come to believe.”

Last week Patrick shared about just how *hard* it is to *keep* good news a secret. When the cats out of the bag with good news, *or any news* it’s hard to keep the facts straight. In our youth Bible study this month, we’re reading the Holy Week scriptures from each Gospel to see the *whole* story using the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Last week we read the scriptures from Matthew where the women met an angel and ran to go tell the news that Jesus has been raised.

John’s account varies a bit—Early that morning, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb with spices to for their beloved they just laid in the tomb before the sabbath. What she discovers is terrifying and concerning news. The stone is rolled away and the tomb is empty. She runs and brings Peter and another disciple to see for himself the scene: the white linen cloths that lie where his body once laid. Peter sees and heads home. The other disciple sees, believes what Mary has said, and heads home. Mary remains crying by the tomb, she looks in and discovers two angels in the tomb, she turns around and see what she initially thinks is a gardener, until he calls out her name and she realizes it is Jesus. Jesus tells her to go and tell the disciples that she has seen the Lord. She hurries back to the disciples to tell them this good news.

That first Easter day was marked by doubt, confusion, joy and fear.

Our scripture picks up in the evening on that resurrection day, Mary had seen Jesus that morning and came and shared the good news with the disciples. Yet, the next verse puts us in a room behind a locked door with a group of very frightened disciples. Their response to this very mysterious day is to hide in fear. John tells us that they are scared not just because all that had happened that day, but for fear of the people who colluded with the Empire to destroy Jesus. They have every reason to suspect that they too are on the list of who is next—to be convicted of *guilt by association* with this so-called King of the Jews.

The disciples are fearful. Good news does not erase fear. Good news, incredible news, can ignite hope, but even hope does not eliminate genuine fear. They were in a familiar place, filled with unfamiliar fear.

But there is no barrier too big for God to reach them and us—if a shut tomb cannot keep Jesus out, a locked door doesn’t stand a chance. Jesus seeks out the scared disciples, enters the room, bringing peace as the antidote to fear. Jesus speaks directly to their fear saying “Peace be with you” not once but twice—words that were spoken less than a week before at the Last Supper.

That first Easter day was marked by doubt, confusion and fear. But Jesus breaks in with peace.

When Jesus says *peace*, he doesn’t mean what the empire meant. Roman peace — Pax Romana — was enforced through military conquest, surveillance and oppression. It was the silence after the violence. It was the absence of uprising, not the presence of justice.

The type of peace that Jesus brings outlives any government. The Hebrew word is *shalom* — and it isn't tranquility. It's wholeness. The outcast brought back in. The lion seeing the lamb as neighbor. The first made last and the last made first. It's the kind of peace that got Jesus killed — because it refused to leave things as they were and Jesus wasn't sent into this world to maintain the status quo.

Our scripture reading this morning shows us that fear isn't the only response to Christ's resurrection. Doubt lives behind that door too.

Christ's peace is even and especially for Thomas that week. After what they had witnessed on the cross, Mary's news of Jesus' resurrection seemed too good to be true. Thomas is one of my favorite disciples because he is a realist—he tells it like it is. Throughout the gospel of John, Thomas is engaging with Jesus, following Jesus, and saying something when he doesn't understand. He doesn't get ignored or shunned for this. Jesus engages with him.

Jesus calls Thomas by name, seeks him out and reveals his wounds. He lets Thomas not only see, but touch his wounds and his response is the only declaration of divinity of Jesus in the Gospel of John. He exclaims “My Lord, My God!”

This passage shows us the myriad of responses to Christ's resurrection that Easter day. If we are honest, we are all at least one of these disciples at some point in our lives.

Peter—the rock upon whom Jesus would build his church, yet the one who denies even knowing Jesus shortly after his arrest. The one who sees and keeps the good news to himself, pondering how this all could be.

The other disciple—the one who hears, investigates, sees and believes, yet still returning home with the good news kept to himself.

Mary—the one who sees, experiences God and shares the good news immediately.

The many disciples—locked behind a door, fearful and concerned of what association with Jesus the Christ might mean for our lives.

And Thomas--confronted by questions of faith, asking God to reveal himself to us—looking for assurance, evidence to make things clear—to make the things that don't make any sense to us have purpose.

Clayton Schmidt writes that “Faith is a mystery of the heart that the mind wants to solve. To admit that we take certain things on faith is to say that we are willing for things not to make perfect sense.”¹

The disciples show us that faith is a lifetime journey filled with ups and downs, revelation and searching, assurance and doubt. And yet, what remains steadfast is that our God is a God who claims us—who calls us by name, seeks us out, breaks down any barrier that our doubts, confusion, or grief may put up. God reveals himself and gives us peace. Peace that surpasses assurance, and peace that calls us to have the courage to bring about a Kingdom here on Earth full of God's justice and love.

¹ Murchison, Feasting on the Word, Easter 1A Series 395.

Jesus came that Easter evening, not just to reassure the disciples. He comes bearing peace *and* sends them out with courage from the Holy Spirit. Not because they have it all figured out. Not because they are no longer afraid. Because they are loved, claimed and called. Christ *sends* them forth, out into the world to bear God's great too-good-to-be-true news that is turning the world upside down with its justice and mercy.

Earlier in worship, we witnessed Bayla, Katelyn, Graham, Genevieve, Teagan, and Emily confirming the faith that their parents professed at their baptisms for them. They have spent months asking hard and really good questions. They have wrestled with what they believe and why, and they have not always arrived at clean answers, in fact some of their questions left them asking more questions—and that is exactly right. Because Confirmation is not about graduating from church nor is Confirmation celebrating a conclusion you'll stay at for the rest of your life. Confirmation is an opportunity to explore what you believe about God and what it means to be a disciple. Faith is a gift from God, and how it becomes our own is a journey that started before this day and continues long after.

On the Confirmation retreat this year, our keynoter shared about faith as a parabola. Our lives have seasons where we are so sure of things, and seasons where we aren't sure at all. But what remains steadfast is God's commitment to us, despite our commitment to God. God's love walks with us on our way the entire journey.

Our faith journeys are a way of walking, one that loops back and doubles over itself and sometimes loses the trail entirely. What keeps us walking isn't certainty. It's the knowledge that we are known, that God seeks us out, meets us in our most scary and doubtful moments, and reveals himself to us. Not so that we can have a faithful mind (point to brain), but so that we can be faithful servants (point to heart).

And that work begins and continues our whole lives, but especially this Easter season. For many years we have honored the hard work of our Confirmands, their parents and their mentors. But today, in addition to that—our confirmands have a charge for you: May this Confirmation Sunday be a chance to do the work we've been doing this past year!

We go from this place not just witnessing the confirmation of six amazing teenagers that will change the world, but also remembering our collective call to live out our Easter Confessions of Faith each and every day

by being Christ's faithful disciple obeying his word and showing his love, by wrestling with what we believe in all seasons of life, asking questions and being curious about God, devoting ourselves to the church's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

by the way we treat one another,

by the way we advocate for the vulnerable in our midst,

by the way we engage in our communities and bring about God's justice,

by the way we embody a too-good-to-be true God who comes bearing good news of great joy for all: that death does not win, that fear does not have the last word, that love—persistent, peacemaking, barrier-breaking, ever-revealing love—will not ever, ever let us go.

Thanks be to God!