

1 John 1:1-2:2

John 20:19-31

These Are Written

Prove it! That might be a response to anything you have a difficult time believing. It is what is needed in a court room to be sure that lives that are being held in the balance have a fair and correct verdict. It is part of the scientific community's work, to prove or disprove theories. We want it in our relationships, we want proof that our partner loves us, to prove that love is more than words. In the work place we want proof that our work is valuable by getting feedback or even a promotion. That desire for proof starts at a young age. Maybe it is because children so often see adults model the desire for proof.

Still, we do much by faith. We love our children because they are a gift to us, yet even then we talk about bonding, and if mother and child or father and child do not bond it is difficult. Bonding is proof of the relationship.

So it is no wonder that people question those of us who are followers of Jesus. In term of Easter people want proof of the resurrection. Problem is, we can't give it to them, at least not in physical form. We are unable to do that for ourselves. What we do have are the written accounts of the people who came face to face with Jesus after he died and after the news that Jesus was no longer to be found in the tomb.

There are multiple resurrection stories in the gospels. There is the one with the women who saw and touched Jesus on their way back to tell the disciples of their experience at the tomb. There were the two men who were walking back to the village of Emmaus, picked up a stranger, invited him to have dinner and spend the night only to realize that it was Jesus who had been with them the whole time. In our scripture today from the Gospel of John we hear of Jesus appearing to the disciples in the place where they were, and then coming back a week later to show himself to Thomas who deeply desired to have the experience of the risen Jesus that everyone else seemed to be having.

In the writing from 1 John, at a time much later, when communities of Jesus' followers had been formed and were continuing to find meaning and purpose in their experience of Jesus, the writer says, ¹"We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— ³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

That word of life, the life they are speaking about is Jesus. The words of the all the gospels and the writings of the New Testament are the experiences of those who encountered Jesus in their lives. Some are eyewitness accounts. As with anytime people are telling their story, details can vary, not because they are incorrect, but because the story is told from a certain perspective and for a certain audience. But these things are written for us.

John 20:30-31 states, ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” These are written.

You will note that the verse does not say, now Jesus did many other miracles, it says he did many other signs in the presence of his disciples. Jesus lived in a way that his living, his presence, the signs he pointed to, the resurrection experiences, were enough to convince people who had been with him for the three years of his earthly ministry to continue to live out their faith in Jesus even when it meant hardship. This hardship included expulsion from their synagogues, the scrutiny of others, and living with some amount of fear from authorities because of their belief that Jesus was the risen Lord.

We often forget what believing in Jesus cost his disciples, not just the eleven that were left, but all those who came to believe in Jesus as Lord. It still costs, but the cost is worth it because to believe in Jesus is to believe in a way of life that is transforming. It is why mission statement of St. Andrew's says, responding, restoring, rejoicing. Our belief is in lives changed because this man Jesus walked the earth, but not only that, Jesus died and rose again, because, not only was Jesus fully human, but he was fully God.

The proof of lives transformed is when we can see and admit to our sinfulness, not so that we blame ourselves and others and/or feel miserable about ourselves, but so that we can be restored to the people of God we are called to be. To be people who can experience the fullness of God's love and the presence of God in Jesus as well as the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. This is done in community. This is the “why” of the church. It is a place to become more who we are called to be. To be healed, loved, challenged, and restored. It is a place where we are each called to respond to the invitation of God to be in community and to reach out to others through our community of faith. In the process of joining together in community we rejoice with one another and with those we encounter as they too are exposed to and maybe even touched by the gospel of grace that is offered.

The things that have been written about Jesus are there to teach us, to tell us the story of Jesus and those who were closest to him, and these things are written to sustain us. And now we are the witnesses of the faith to those who have never encountered the living Lord.

But how can anyone know of this way of life, this grace, this transforming experience if we never speak of it? We have been given the words of scripture, but there are so many

people who have never even seen a bible let alone broke open the pages. It may be their encounter with you that becomes their first invitation to a transformed life, to a life they could not have imagined. You don't have to have all the answers, but don't hesitate to be a witness through your words and action so that people you encounter know that there is a God who loves them so much that it is beyond their imagining. And it is also okay if that love is still beyond your imagining. Continue to be in community knowing that faith deepens and matures over time.

We cannot cover all that could be said about these things that are written in one short message at a worship service. It takes study, prayer, and conversation. Yet we can begin with these things that are written and then add to them our own lived experience of the risen Lord no matter how small or how grand those experiences may be. That lived experience might come through nature, through another person, or from a prompting of the Holy Spirit at work in your life. Watch for it, listen for it, wait for it. Easter is here, Jesus is risen from the grave, and Jesus is present and as real in our lives now as he was to those first witness who wrote these things so that our joy may be complete and that through believing we may have life in Jesus' name.