**Reflection for April 11, 2021 – “Believing is Seeing”**

**Based on John 20 19-31**

**Prayer:**

Begin with this video footage. [DreamSeed Ministries - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8YxwlofIvQ)

 Many of you will recognize actor Tim Allen in that video clip from the movie “The Santa Claus.” It has become a bit of a tradition at the McLean house. Tim, or Scot Calvin (his actor’s name) is caught up in an interesting paradigm. He is at the North Pole after a long night of his cameo appearance as Santa Claus. It has been an incredible evening, he has ridden on a magic sleigh, squeezed down 8-inch chimney pipes, and delivered toys all over the world. He has seen Santa’s workshop and met hundreds of elves that work in the incredible toy shop. Now he is with another elf drinking hot chocolate and looking out at a polar bear directing traffic. His son is peacefully sleeping in Santa’s sleigh bed. It is surely all a dream. Or not?

Scot Calvin will wake up to a new reality, his life will be changed. It will take him some time to accept it though. And of course, you can all understand what societal challenges Scot faces when he finally does admit, “Yep, I’m the new Santa Claus.” You will have to see the movie for more details.

 Fairy tale, yes, but an insightful segue to our gospel reading of the infamous “Doubting Thomas” that Marsha shared with us. ***“Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”*** I need to see it. I need proof.

 Do we need such proof? Was Jesus resurrected and does Jesus really live? Is this simply an ancient story? Is the resurrection only metaphor for our living and being today? Such are all questions we think about or have reflected over. They are questions of much debate and they are questions bringing many folks into the larger inquiry, is there a God? And if one says yes to that question, the rebuttal might be, OK, then prove it!

 I am reading one of Mitch Albom’s books at the moment, an American author you might know. It’s called “The First Phone Call From Heaven.” The story line is that several people in a small US town start to receive phone calls from departed loved ones in heaven. The callers offer comforting words about the afterlife, and they encourage the living to share publicly what heaven is really like. Heaven is depicted as peaceful and bathed in light. There is harmony and no want or need. It is a place of welcome where there is nothing to fear.

The calls, as one might imagine are received with mixed responses. Some recipients, after the initial shock wears off, are elated. Others are confused and doubtful. Still others suspect a big hoax. One individual throws his phone in a nearby lake wanting no part of this miracle. He just cannot face it.

The calls continue and soon the sleepy little town is awash with newcomers. First the “believers” come camping out and praying on lawns. Then the protestors arrive espousing that the entire business is a huge scam, another religious ruse. Insults are hurled back and forth and predictably, violence erupts. Signs of both protest and affirmation are used as weapons. Chaos follows.

That is the point I stopped reading the other night. And it got me thinking. Isn’t this our reality today? We often position ourselves in camps of believers and non-believers. We take sides and need to prove our point. That is when we don’t listen very well. This isn’t necessarily God or Jesus believers Vs. non-believers, but in situations where we cut off the opportunity for dialogue. Good debate, active listening and potential learning is squashed. Lines are drawn in the sand, I (or we) are right, and you are wrong. End of story, no room for compromise or debate.

That is so tragic. Can we not just talk about differences and listen to each other? Perhaps if we did we might all benefit. Perhaps if we did more folks would come to recognize that Jesus is real and that there is a God.

I would love to have a chat just now with the biblical Thomas or as a substitute, any of the Thomas’ that we might encounter today. If they were willing to have a discussion, perhaps over a nice cup of tea, I would love to hear their stories. And I would try very hard not to convince them one way or the other. I would hope to have an open, honest dialogue.

“Tell me about your unbelief, you doubt,” I might ask. A likely response could be “well I have never seen a miracle and I am sure no one can come back from the dead.” I wonder what that individual would say if I replied that “believing is in the seeing, not the other way around.”

Perhaps I would offer to go for a short walk. “You see those bulbs coming up in our front garden by the church and the buds on that tree. (By the way that is a memorial tree, every time we look at it we remember the individual who was a part of our congregation for years). I would say that “both of those observations confirm miracles.”

Perhaps we could then walk down to Beach Drive and with any luck catch mom and her ducklings swimming by. That’s another miracle, three within a few short minutes.

I might conclude with something like, “when we are open to and believe in possibility, we might begin to see something in a different light.”

I understand Thomas’ reluctance. I understand the disbelief of hearing that a friend had a phone call from heaven. I understand disbelief in stories many of us have heard or read about individuals who have come back from death. I understand reluctance to trust anything a clairvoyant might say in a reading. I get it. I have been a doubting Thomas myself.

But I am drawn to the words of the Elf Judy who responded to Scot Calvin’s disbelief in the Santa Claus movie, “Seeing isn’t Believing, Believing is Seeing.” “You don’t have to see it to believe it, you just know!”

These words are not just meant for children watching a Christmas movie. They strike me as profound words to live by. They are not only words for a child waiting for Santa or the Easter Bunny, but for all of us. They are words that Jesus uttered to Thomas, ***Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”***

 Jesus is alive when someone in West Kelowna is offered a warm bed and a meal, a safe haven amidst a hostile world. And Jesus is alive when that same individual receives a dose of Naloxone that brings them back from death’s door.

Jesus is alive when a sexual abuse case is heard and not trivialized. He is alive when a country or state repeals ridiculous laws banning same sex marriage, or when women of mixed race or colour are treated with dignity and respect as equals.

**Believing is seeing**. Watch a child at the park with parent or grandparent pushing them gently on the swing or catching them at the bottom of the slide. Wipe the melted ice cream off the sticky hands and bandage a scraped knee.

Go to a friend’s home and offer some assistance with cleaning or provide a meal. Dust off a driveway. Help someone get their groceries or drive them to an appointment.

Jesus lives in all these moments.

**A blind man sees** – with persistence and determination perhaps we can help someone see the world differently. Perhaps we can get them to change for their own benefit or that of others?

**A haemorrhaging woman is healed** - perhaps through our acts of compassion and understanding there is the possibility of relief for the physically or psychologically impaired?

**The Leper is cured** – perhaps accepting people for who they are regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, or social standing brings new hope to the disenfranchised.

“Thomas, I can hear myself saying” all of those are miracles, all of those are the works of Jesus, all of those tell me Jesus lives.”

###  An actor in a movie plays a fictional Santa Claus, but the story beckons us to believe in the miracle. A character in a book makes us think about connections with loved ones who have departed, but who are still with us every day.

### If one believes in the spirit of the Living Christ, we can see and experience it every day.

###  Are you a believer?

### Thanks for listening this morning, Amen