

The Easter Miracle

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon explores the themes of doubt and faith through the story of Thomas, emphasizing the importance of hearing the Word of God for spiritual awakening.

Duration: 34:22

Scripture: Matthew 4:4, Acts 1:8, Acts 8:4, Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Easter"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power of the common testimony and witness of believers in spreading the word of God. He shares a personal story of a man who initially lived a double life but was convicted of his sins and gave his life to Christ through the testimony of his daughter. The speaker encourages believers not to be hindered by fear or feelings of inadequacy in sharing the gospel, as God uses ordinary people to proclaim His word. He also highlights the importance of being knowledgeable about the Bible and being filled with the Holy Spirit to effectively share the gospel.

Transcript

Almighty God and Almighty Father, how is it we can come to life unless you send forth your Holy Spirit to awaken us? We are utterly dependent upon you to be able to see the wonders of our Savior. And so come, we pray, open your word to us and let faith be strong. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Good morning to you. It is extremely customary after Easter to address the conversion of Thomas, and so I'd like to call your attention to that passage in John chapter 20. It is a bit unique in that we don't really have the testimony of the other apostles, but we do have the testimony of Thomas, this conversion of Thomas.

And I must say he has always gotten an enormously bad rap. And I say that because of the nature of the text. I mean, he's called Doubting Thomas.

I mean, for centuries, Doubting Thomas. And there's reason for it. I mean, you come into the text, you realize that the apostles have come running to him.

They have said, we have seen the Lord. He has been raised from the dead. But Thomas says, and you see these words, you hear them, unless I see, I will never believe.

Unless I see with my eyes, my physical natural eyes, I will not believe. And so you've got this brand upon him. But the point is this.

The other Gospels testify that the women, when they saw Jesus alive from the dead, they came running to the apostles. And they said, we have seen the Lord. And the apostles, I'll read it to you.

You'll never believe it unless I read it to you. These women, they came from the tomb, and they told the apostles, this is Mark 16, verse 10, who had been with them as they mourned and wept. But when the apostles heard that he was alive and been seen by her, by Mary, by the women, they would not believe the women.

They would not believe it. Doubting Thomas, doubting all of them, absolutely every one of them. They're all caught in this wicked condition of the soul called doubt.

It paralyzes us. It freezes us so that we can not see, we can not hear, we don't understand. And so I make my appeal that the resurrection stories all say this.

The men on the road to Emmaus, as they say to the stranger, oh, if you had known what's been happening in these days, Jesus of Nazareth, this great prophet, this great prophet, mighty in word and deed. And then there were these women, like they went to the tomb, whatever, they amazed us, kind of like he wasn't there. They don't get it.

I mean, they utterly don't get it. And so what you find is that this condition of the soul is utterly serious to the human life. To the human heart.

What do I mean by that? Well, I mean just that. When you go back in the record of Scripture, and I just don't understand all of it, you go back to the record of Scripture and what you're going to find during the time of the Exodus, that God raised up Moses with mighty signs and mighty wonders. And Moses came and spoke to Pharaoh and down came the plagues.

Down with power. Destroying the gods of Egypt. And the Israelites saw it.

They were led out of Egypt. The Red Sea parted. They walked down.

They walked up on dry land. The Egyptians went down and were crushed. And they rose up on the other side, the Israelites, with songs of praise.

They went to Sinai. They beheld the presence of God. His thunders, His lightnings, the sound of trumpets and darkness and gloom.

And they heard the voice of God. Provided by manna, provided by water, they had all the signs and all the wonders. And yet they did not and refused to believe.

The condition of their soul was so hard that the Lord finally said in Numbers chapter 14 verse 11, how long will this people despise me? How long will they not believe in me? You'll find the Hebrews writer in Hebrews 3 and 4 try to exposit this text because these people saw His power, saw His signs and wonders, yet they did not believe. I would tell you the gospels are no different. These apostles, these disciples were in the presence of Jesus.

They saw His miracles. They saw His power. They heard His teaching and were in the anointing of His teaching.

They saw the lepers cleansed. They saw the dead raised. They saw Lazarus raised.

They saw it all. Then tell me this, why couldn't they see? Why were they blind? Why were they deaf? You see, Thomas has got it all wrong. Unless I see, I will not believe.

My friends, the entirety, the record of Scripture comes rushing to Thomas and say, Thomas, you're utterly wrong about this. It's not true. You can see, but in seeing, not see.

This was the point Jesus told us of the man who was in torment in hell. You'll find that at the end of Luke 16, this man in torment, he cries out to heaven and says, please send somebody back who has been raised from the dead to my five brothers, so that my five brothers might see, and in seeing, repent, and in repenting be saved from this place of torment. And heaven responds, no, no.

Even if somebody came who was raised from the dead, if they cannot hear the preaching of Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if they see someone raised from the dead. What does that mean? Well, it means this, is that our faculties to God are utterly hardened, and even if we saw, it doesn't mean that we'll see at all. And so we come to this moment, and I say it concerns all of us, every single one of us.

Every single one of us are praying for somebody in our family, our friends, who cannot see. They don't understand. They're not walking with the Lord, and we don't know why.

It's a mystery, is it not? How is it that our children can be raised in the same household, and go off into life, and some follow Jesus, and some in rebellion to Jesus? They had the same background, the same love, heard the same sounds. The Easter miracle came on the siblings, but not the other. Why? Why our own brother, our own sister? Why our spouse? Why those we love? How is it possible to come into the wonders of our Lord, to partake of His Word, to hear, and see, and understand the powers of God upon us, and yet not get it, utterly not get it? And so we pray, Lord, let the Easter miracle happen.

You see, this is the point behind my job. I can't do my job. I can't make you see.

I can't make you hear. I can't make you understand, but I can do this. I can fall back on the premise given to us in the Bible.

It's found in Romans 10 verse 17, and that passage is what I'd like to zero in on for a few minutes. This passage has got its own life in many ways to it, in Romans 10 and 17. And you'll find this testimony here, born in this chapter, that faith comes, faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.

Faith comes, faith comes through hearing, faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ. I've got to say this. We have got to come to an understanding of faith.

Faith comes. It is given to us by God from heaven above. It's not something worked inside of us.

It's something given to us by God. And what does it do? It opens up an awareness of God. It awakens the soul to God.

And suddenly that moment happens when you're suddenly aware. You're suddenly aware of His presence. Your soul is suddenly awakened.

You've got eyes to see, but your real eyes see, and you don't even know how it's happened. Your ears, but you now can hear God speaking to you. Your heart becomes warm strangely, and you begin to know and understand.

That's the sign of how faith starts to come into the soul. We start coming alive. An awakening begins to dawn upon the soul, and with that awakening comes substance.

And so it's not just an awareness of God, but it's a substance, a content that we suddenly know certain things. We suddenly know what God is, that God is here. God is now.

God is with us. God is personal. We suddenly know there's a distance between us and God, a separation.

Something's wrong. And He gives us that wonderful heart, just as it was said in Jeremiah, in chapter 29 and verse 13, you will seek me, and as you seek me, you will find me. When you seek me with all of your heart, and I will be found by you.

Something comes upon the soul, and you've got this awareness that God is. Your awareness says that something about Him is there, and that's why the Hebrews writer actually now goes back and says, now let me expound the whole of the Bible to you. He said, do you remember Abel? Let's go back to Abel by faith.

By faith Abel came. He came with an offering. He came with a sacrifice.

He knew to approach God with a sacrifice, because God had given them that knowledge, that awareness. Faith came into him. How did Noah know to build an ark? Faith came.

He had eyes to see. A conviction came upon him. He saw and understood the judgment to come, and he built an ark.

Abraham, how did he know? How did he know that the child was going to come from his own body? He didn't understand it. He presented Eliezer, his servant, to the Lord, said, Eliezer will have the son. And then Genesis 15, 6, the Lord says, no, and faith comes to Abraham.

We see it expounded from Romans 4 back, but faith comes to Abraham, and suddenly he sees what he couldn't see. My old body, I'm having a son. My old wife, she's having a son.

That's how it's said. Faith suddenly is the conviction of things not seen, and he became fully convinced that God was able to do what God said he would do. Faith comes.

Faith comes. The eyes of the heart open. And that, my dear friends, is the entirety of the story of Thomas.

Thomas sees Jesus. He sees him with his physical eyes. He sees him standing there alive from the dead.

But what does Thomas really see? Listen to his confession. Listen to Thomas' heart. He had seen Lazarus raised from the dead, had he not? He had seen the young 12-year-old raised from the dead, had he not? He had seen the young man from Nain in a coffin, and Jesus raised him from the dead, and Thomas saw it with his own eyes.

Now he sees Jesus raised from the dead. But he doesn't just simply say, I see now that you're raised from the dead. No, no.

He says the words that only the eyes of faith can see. Thomas says the words, my Lord, my God. Friends, those are words of worship.

Those are words of understanding. His soul is awakened. And that is, Paul said, the word of faith which we preach.

The word of faith. We preach that faith comes. We preach faithfully the testimony of Jesus, the Word of God.

Yes, but something has to happen, and it happened there for Thomas, and it happens there for us when suddenly the heavens open and our senses are awakened unto God, and we suddenly know. Listen to how Paul says it in Romans 10, 9 and 10, this word of faith which we preach, that if we confess Jesus as Lord and believe in our heart God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved. For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness.

With the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. It happens. I can't explain how it happens.

It happens. It happens. The Spirit of God awakens us.

He awakens us. We're suddenly alive to Him, and we know it. And this moment happens in our soul where suddenly we know the power of God upon us.

The cleansing, the washing comes upon us, and we know we are born again in Christ. I don't know how else to say it. We know it.

It's inside of us. We can see, but we cannot see. We know, but we can't explain how we know.

But we know the conviction of things unseen. Faith has awakened my soul. And so it is said in Peter, first chapter of Peter, verse 8, listen to these words.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And though you did not see him now, but rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, because your eyes see. Down through the long times of church history and from the New Testament on, there has always been the office of preaching.

Always. There's always been the office of the preacher. God raises up preachers to proclaim the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, because the axiom is true.

Faith comes through hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. And so God raises up those who proclaim the Word of God, the Word of Christ, and the testimony of Jesus. I want to look at that in two different aspects.

The first one is the most known to us. What I'm doing now, it's the office of preaching. What happened in the acts of the apostles? The Spirit of God came down upon the church.

Pentecost came, and with it rose up a fisherman. A fisherman. He was not trained in seminary.

He wasn't trained with elocution gifts at all. I mean, if he had any elocution, he learned it in a boat with other fishermen's things I would not want to hear. The Spirit of God came upon him, and he rose to this

office.

And what did Peter do? Did he tell a good cracking joke? Did he have a wonderful style about him? No, no. He simply preached the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And what happened while he was doing it? When he proclaimed the cross, when he proclaimed the resurrection, when he told everybody that Father has now made his Son both Lord and Christ, the people got overwhelmed, and they said, what shall we do? Or as it's said later by the jailer, what shall I do to be saved? What shall we do? You see, faith had come and awakened their senses, their eyes, their ears.

That sin-sick soul that cannot see, cannot hear, cannot understand, and yet now they see, now they hear, now they understand. And Peter says, repent. Let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and you shall receive the forgiveness of your sins.

Then you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and new life will come upon you. I don't understand how it happened, but the Lord added to the church those who were being saved. Power of new birth upon the preaching of the Word, upon the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Just a few chapters later, Stephen would preach. His face like an angel, the Spirit of God upon him with wisdom and faith. But upon his hearers, faith did not come at all.

They stopped up their ears, and they ran upon him, and they killed him. Faith did not come. And my brothers, my sisters, my friends, I don't understand how this happens, but I know it does.

I can't explain the mysteries behind it. I don't know it. I don't understand it.

Why under the anointed preaching of God's Word, and the movement of the Spirit of God, some simply come to faith, and they're alive in Christ. And others, their hearts grow hard, dull. They become more blind.

And that's where I tell you this. God has raised up more than the office of preaching. Listen to me carefully.

He has lifted up, and appointed, and raised all people who belong to him to be his preachers. Did you hear me just then? He has called all of us to be his preachers. Did you hear me just then? Why do I say it? Because I'll tell you this.

Jesus told us in Acts 1.8, he said that my power is going to come upon you to be witnesses, my witnesses to the ends of the earth. Whom did the Holy Spirit fall upon? Just the preachers? Just the apostles? He fell upon all of us, that we might be testimonies, bare testimonies of Jesus. Go ahead and look at some point at Acts 8.4. When the church got scattered, everybody went out preaching the Word.

Preaching the Word. Now this is the problem today, if you want my opinion. Go to Google.

You'll find out how many Bibles are printed. Five billion copies. Five billion copies of a book nobody reads.

The illiteracy of the Bible, just among the Christians, is abhorrent. This Bible gives us life when the Spirit of God moves upon us. It brings us to life.

It feeds the soul. It feeds the heart. It grows us up.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He feeds us by the Word, and yet we're utterly ignorant of it. And yet when we, a normal, common person, come under the anointing of the Spirit and get fed with the glories of this gospel, and our soul comes awake, so a song is born in us, and we begin to sing it and know it.

This is why I tell you, I remember in the 1990s, I went to promise keepers, Lord have mercy. Every so often a bunch of men decide, oh, we've got to do something. It's lovely.

But this movement swept across the globe. I mean, I found myself in Shea Stadium with like 50,000 men. Nightmare.

But a man went to the stage and he said, I've got a question for all of you men. If the Lord rescued you from the mighty preaching and anointing of the Word of God, would you raise your hand? And about 40% raised their hand because they'd come to know Jesus through the preaching of God's Word. If the man said, if you came to saving faith because somebody came alongside you and shared the good news of what Jesus has done for you, would you raise your hand? And a good 50-60% of them raised their hand.

The common preaching of the common person who knows Jesus and has His song in their heart. I remember a man at church when I was first starting in ministry, doing all the works that we do in church. And this man would come and he would drive by, he said, drive by dad.

Drive by, dump the wife and kids, and go to the bakery. When church was over, come back, pick up the wife and the kids. One day he came in and his six or seven or eight-year-old leapt into his arm, daddy, daddy.

She pointed his heart. I just want you to know Jesus. The man came under the conviction of his sins and gave his life to Christ through the testimony of his daughter.

So don't tell me you're Moses and you're not eloquent and you can't speak. I'm not good at this. I don't know what to say.

I'm not saying nothing, which is actually a double negative, which means you can. Or you're like Jeremiah, I'm just too young. I'm too young in the faith.

I'll never know what to say and I'll botch it. Or like Timothy, that spirit of fear and hesitation. You're afraid if you'll say something to somebody you love, you'll lose them.

So you say nothing. You're afraid if you say it's at home or at work or amongst your families, you'll be branded, you'll be isolated, you'll be labeled, you'll be pushed aside and pushed down, branded, isolated, rejected, lose your job. And so we shut up and say nothing.

All because we're caught by fear. My dear friends, but this is how God has appointed his Word through us, you and me. This is what he does through the common testimony and witness of us who know him and see him because he has allowed faith to come into our hearts and open the faculties that were dead, eyes that were blind, ears that were deaf, hearts that were cold and hard to him.

He, faith. That's why it says, by grace, Ephesians 2, 8, 9, by grace you have been saved through faith. Through faith.

This thing that comes from God that awakens us, aware of him and his presence and our sin and his cross and his work and the cry of our hearts, what must I do to be saved? That, my friends, was what was inside young preacher in the 1850s. Not that I was around then, but there was a young man in the 1850s, a man who God would raise up to be a herald and a proclaimer of the gospel that the generation of England had not had since the days of George Whitefield in the 1700s. This man was raised up to herald the gospel, such a powerful witness, his name was Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

That man today has 68 volumes of his sermons printed. People are still feeding the word of God from Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Do you know when he was actually preaching, somebody was in the front row, and nobody's doing that today, taking shorthand of the... nobody's hand, I don't know why, it's quite... there's a reason why.

Taking shorthand of everything that was being said by the great Spurgeon, and what did they do? The next day, they would hand write it, and it would be edited, and then it would be typed out, and then it would be telegraphed all over the world. People in America would get Charles Haddon Spurgeon sermons, and preachers would go to the pulpit, and all they did was read Spurgeon and watch people come to saving faith. Mighty preacher.

He had a voice that they said was like one or two in a generation. He had fire in his bones. He preached the word of God in its utter simplicity all of his 57, 58 years.

But when he was 15, his soul was racked inside, because he didn't know God. He was lost. He wanted to be saved.

He didn't know how. And so he decided at the age of 15, he would go to every church, and he would find his way to hear, how must... how can I who am lost be rescued? How does it happen? Who's got the cure for my soul? And he would go to these wonderful churches that always spoke the wonders of God's word to the already, and never to the not yet. He was the not yet.

He didn't know. Everything was wonderful. Everybody had a lovely time, but his soul was longing and aching.

And so on January 6th, this man got up on a Sunday to go to church. He found a church he wanted to go to, but the day was too snowy. Blizzard had come down upon England.

And so he dashed into a church nearby, the Primitive Methodists. Oh, stay away from the Primitive Methodists, my dear friends. They're too wild for you.

They're too ruckus. Oh, it would turn an Anglican to absolute dust to hear the wonders of the Primitive Methodists. And in came this young man to sit in the back.

And that day, because of the blizzard that had come down, there were only 12 to 15 in the church. Even the preacher couldn't make it to church that day because of the snow. And so this man stood up into the pulpit.

From the 15-year-old Spurgeon eyes, he said, I found that man quite stupid. I think only a 15-year-old can actually say the word stupid and get away with it. He was common.

His words couldn't even, he wasn't articulate. He didn't pronounce his words. There was nothing about him that was appealing.

He was poor. He was untrained. He was a common man, a common man whose senses had been awakened to God.

And all he did, Romans 10, 17, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. He went to Isaiah 45, 22. Isaiah 45, 22.

Look unto me. Look unto me and be ye saved. Look not with the eyes of the flesh.

Look not with natural eyes. Look not to the Father. Not right now.

Look not to the Holy Spirit. Not right now. Look unto Jesus.

Cast your eyes upon Him. Look upon Him there upon the cross, dying for your sins. Look upon Him raised on that Easter day.

The tomb is empty. Look upon Him ascending in glory. Look upon Him seated at the right hand of the Father.

Look upon Him. Look and look and when you see, you shall be saved. You shall live.

And then, oh, this man, this uneducated, poor, common preacher, whose name would never be known in history, pointed to Spurgeon in the back, pointed to him. Lord have mercy. You young man, I say to you, you young man, look, look and you shall live.

And the Spirit of God came upon him. And he said, I felt like I was a primitive Methodist right then and there. He said, I wanted to jump and leap and dance like a primitive Methodist because I was forgiven.

I was forgiven. I was set free. Christ was now my Lord.

He was now my Savior. Faith came to a man who had turned the world upside down through the common preaching of the simple gospel when faith comes. It was in those days of Spurgeon in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

There's a woman who is blind, and all she could do was sing the songs of the glories of our Savior. She lived in a town with a circus guy named P.T. Barnum. That's not a family you want to be near.

In 1874, she wrote the great hymn we're about to sing, Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine, heir of salvation, purchased of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood. This is my story.

This is my song, praising my Savior all the day long. Oh, dear friends, how does it happen? I don't know. But once that song comes into you, let the song go through you.

There are people that you are praying for who do not yet see, who do not yet hear, people you fiercely love. Do not stop praying. I know some of us have taken evangelism courses, and we become really salesmen that are really unhelpful.

It doesn't take an evangelism course. It takes the compassion of Jesus. Listen to me.

Compassion and prayer. Asking the Holy Spirit when it's time to speak. He'll show you.

He'll tell you to resist the fears of, but I'm not eloquent. I can't do this. I'm not good.

I'll break the relationship. They'll never talk to me. I'll lose my job.

Just put them aside. And when the opportunity comes, let the song that's inside of you be sung, that they might know what you know. Faith comes by hearing.

Hearing by the Word of Christ through you. Are you saved? Are you born again in Christ? Has faith come to you and opened your eyes and your heart so you can hear and know Jesus is mine, my Savior? Friends, if you don't know this, seek Him with all your heart and ask Him for faith to come so you can say with Thomas, my Lord and my God. Praise Him.

Our fathers wanted us to never forget, and so they gave us this gift. If you would kindly stand. I know it sounds like tradition and rote, but this is the story.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

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