



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Larry Moffet, Senior Pastor APRIL 15, 2012

Trust is Belief

Today, a simple word: sometimes a simple word changes everything. I hope this simple word makes this Easter story come alive in new ways for you.

The word in Greek that usually gets translated “believe” is probably better translated “trust.”

The Greek word translated into English as “believe,” *pisteuo*, is much closer in meaning to “trust” and “confidence” than our English word “believe.”

We usually hear the story of Jesus’ appearance to his followers behind locked doors on the Sunday after Easter. The Gospel of John says that took place on the Evening of Easter Day, and that the Apostle Thomas wasn’t there, Jesus returned exactly one week later, again appearing to his friends still hiding behind locked doors sharing another meal.

There is a lot in this story. Something in this story probably speaks to you.

Even after the resurrection, Jesus’ closest friends were afraid. Thomas, who obviously knew Jesus well refuses to believe the others when they say they have seen Jesus.

A week later, believing or not, the disciples are still afraid, behind locked doors. Thomas may not believe his friends, but he is eating with them anyway.

Jesus arrives again, and again the first words he shares with them are **“Peace be with you.”**

It is a beautiful story. It has, however, been used throughout the years as a hammer on the heads of persons who find it hard to be believers. Because of translations, belief has been portrayed as being a set of ideas, an intellectual process.

Changing “belief” to “trust” adds new light to the story. Listen:

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, **“Peace be with you.”**

²⁷Then he said to Thomas, **“Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but trust.”**

²⁸Thomas answered him, **“My Lord and my God!”**

²⁹Jesus said to him, **“Have you trusted because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to trust.”**

Doubt is not the opposite of belief. Belief is not assent. It is not cerebral. Can you re-image **“Belief”** as **“Trust?”**

Note that Thomas’ confession of faith is not a sweeping intellectual statement such as: “You are the Christ.” Thomas speaks in very personal words: **“My Lord and my God.”** He expresses his personal trust and confidence in the risen Christ as **“my Lord and my God.”**

As I have watched the growth of people around me for years it is clear that belief comes easier for some than for others. I am not more Christlike because it is easier for me to believe than it is for my nephew, for example.

However, to be more in tune with Christ, and God's actions in this world,

I do need to open myself up to trust.

I've been spending more time lately with people who have a simple trust, and I am a better person for it.

Sometimes we tend to think of withholding trust as proof of intellectual rigor.

If we approach everything, be it academic research or our own relationships, as a skeptic, we think we are "on top of things." If we suspect people until they prove themselves, we think we are less likely to be hurt or taken advantage of.

There are things around us that we need to be skeptical of. However, in relationships in this life, and eternally, Jesus says: "Open yourself up to trust."

Having a narrow window of trust does not help us grow spiritually. Every now and then I must remind myself that if someone fails our trust, it is "on them."

**Trusting does not mean we are less intelligent or less perceptive.
Our trust is our willingness to be connected.**

We as people of faith are called to be community builders. This congregation has many people who work hard as volunteers or as professionals to strengthen the community, to build the common good. We are good citizens – not only of the community, but also we are as Ephesians 2:19 says, "**We are no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens of the household of God.**"

We trust that people will sound the sirens when there is a funnel cloud. We trust our water supply. We trust the Fire Department will come. We often trust our neighbors.

Wherever Jesus went he built community as a way of getting people to live in the light, and to trust. He brought people together for meals and for times of sharing so that they could support and strengthen each other.

Focusing on Trust helps me understand what it means to walk in the light"

⁷This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you,
that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all.

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Christ and walk in darkness...
we do not do what is true;

**⁷but if we walk in the light as Christ himself is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another...**

I see examples of trust in our children. How they trust us! Let's live up to their trust and focus on their needs. That is one way we can all be children of the light.

My little nephew has decided to be the family trainer. At age 2 ½ he takes us by the hand and leads us to the exercise machines in his grandparents' house. He turns them on and exercises with you. He builds community and models a sweet trust. He is a child of the light. That is the way I want to live, too.

Two weeks ago I learned something about Redwood trees. They have figured out how to survive winds and fires by living in community

With the bedrock being so close to the surface of the soil there is no way the Redwoods could have a root structure deep enough to support the huge trees. Below ground they link their root structure so completely they function like one organism. Above ground they lean on each other. That is how they are able to withstand wind and fires and keep on growing toward the light:

Trust, and grow in the light!
Belief is trust. Trust is belief.



Larry:

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

“Peace be with you.”

²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again,

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

“Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven then; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Lynne:

²⁴Thomas, (who was called the Twin), one of the 12, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, **“We have seen the Lord.”**

But he said to them, **“Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”**

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

“Peace be with you.” ²⁷Then he said to Thomas,

“Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”

²⁸Thomas answered him, **“My Lord and my God!”**

Larry:

²⁹Jesus said to him, **“Have you believed because you have seen me?**

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Lynne:

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written

in this book. ³¹These 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.

EPISTLE SCRIPTURE – 1 JOHN 1:1-9

⁵This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you, that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all.

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Christ while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true;

⁷but if we walk in the light as Christ himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...and he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

⁵This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you, **that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all.**

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FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

An Open-Spirited Community of Faith and Action

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Worship Services - Sundays 8:30 & 10:45 AM