



**Sermons from St. Marks
United Church of Christ
New Albany, Indiana**



Blinded by ...Doubt

Text: John 20:1-18

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Easter Sunday, 2007

There's a marvelous story about a Rabbi in New York who wanted to attend an Easter Service to see what it was like. The Rabbi had a Christian friend who he called and his friend invited the Rabbi to come to church with him on Easter.

When the preacher got up to give the sermon the preacher said, "The story of the tomb being empty is not important."

Then he said, "The story of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene is not important."

He went on, "The story of Jesus appearing to the apostles is not important."

At this point the Rabbi leaned over to his friend and asked, "So, what is important?"

The first impulse, if we are really honest when it comes to Easter, is doubt.

Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves. They doubted.

Mary Magdalene was crying, blinded by tears, because she doubted.
Like the apostles and like her we are blinded....mostly by doubt.

And doubt is often easy to come by.

The recent documentary by James Cameron and Simcha Jacobovici, despite many of their words, was a cynical attempt to cast doubt on Jesus and Easter.

In the early Christian Church there were rival "Gospels" written, books that never made it into our Bible, which attempted to discredit Jesus and the events of his death and resurrection.

Throughout history, Easter and doubt have walked hand in hand.

And, to be honest, Jesus didn't make it easy.

He performed miracles only for those who already believe in him. Jesus would never

perform a miracle to **prove** who he was.

And Jesus, when he was raised from the dead, only appeared to people who already believed in him. If it had been me, I'd have come back and tweaked the noses of Pilate, Herod, and the Sanhedrin and said to them those immortal words, 'I'm back!'

But Jesus was much more mature than I am.

Easter may best be seen by seeing life without Easter. Sometimes a good thing is best seen through the lens of something negative.

The famous Christmas movie, *It's a Wonderful Life* portrayed life without the main character. He learned how beloved and needed he was by seeing what life would have been like had he not lived.

When we have pain it feels bad; but pain helps us appreciate good health.

The rain enables us to celebrate the sunshine.

If there had been no Easter every funeral sermon I have ever preached is a lie. Any sense of hope I share with people who grieve and any sense of hope I have from losing people I love, comes from Easter. It comes from the belief that Jesus was raised from the dead and that there is hope when we die. If no Easter, I have been lying to others and to myself.

If there had been no Easter 2000 years of Christianity has been invalidated. People have more than remembered or honored Jesus, people have staked their lives on Jesus. Martyrs' deaths would be in vain. Missionaries who have brought so much comfort have done so ultimately based on a farce.

Actually my entire life would be a life of giving false hope to people and perpetuating a lie.

If there was no Easter Jesus was just some great teacher like so many from the ancient world. He'd join the ranks of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates and be studied by some, but he would not have been worth committing one's life to.

If there was no Easter. If all we lived with was doubt.

But, the tomb was empty.

But Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene.

Jesus appeared to the apostles.

And we, 2000 years later, embrace Easter with faith, and celebrate Easter with joy because it is the day that ultimately gives us the greatest hope of all.

