

April 16, 2023

Witnesses to the Resurrection

John 20:19-31

1.

Do you believe in God? Do you believe in the existence of God and His presence? I know this might seem like a foolish question, for you are a person of strong faith. However, it is a daring act to believe in God, as no one can see or touch God, or hear His voice with human ears. Many people ask how one can believe in such an unidentified being full of ambiguity. However, we believe firmly in the existence of God and His presence with us for the following reasons:

First, we recognize the existence of God through creation. As Paul points out in Romans 1, “*Since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse*” (vs. 20). Just as we acknowledge the existence of an artist through their artworks, we become aware of the existence of the Creator through all the works He has made.

Second, we believe in God’s presence through the testimonies of those who have experienced God in a practical way. Although there is no one who has seen God, there have been innumerable men, women, and children in human history who have experienced God in their lives. You might be one of them. God has continuously been revealing who He is to His human creatures. Many figures in the Bible stories, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and so on, are the representatives who experienced God firsthand, by hearing Him with their hearts, though not by seeing Him.

Third, and most definitely and crucially, we recognize the existence of God, know who He is, and have faith in Him through Jesus Christ. He is God Incarnate. As John articulates it, “*No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known*” (John 1:18). Jesus himself announced when Philip asked him to show the Father: “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9).

2.

The evidence abounds to reveal the existence of God and His presence in the world. But still, there are people who ask if God really exists. That is one of the silliest questions. Can you imagine a tree that does not believe in the existence of the ground on which it stands? Can a bird doubt if the sky exists? How can a creature deny the existence of its Creator?

«There is a conversation going on between two babies inside their mother’s womb. After arguing if there is life after delivery, they begin to talk about the existence of a mother: “Well, I don’t know,” said the second, “but certainly we will meet Mother, and she will take care of us.” The first replied, “Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That’s laughable. If Mother exists, then where is She now?” The second said, “She is all around us. We are surrounded by Her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her, this world would not and could not exist.” Said the first, “Well, I don’t see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn’t exist.” To which the second replied, “Sometimes, when you’re in silence and you focus and you really listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above.”»

I hope we are not like the silly baby who denies the mother’s existence even though it is living inside her womb. The psalmist says, “*The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’*” (Psalm 14:1).

3.

There were many faithful witnesses in the first century who physically encountered the Risen Christ and risked their lives to testify to his resurrection. Their testimonies have convinced countless believers to have faith in the Risen Christ. However, even Jesus' disciples did not initially believe in his resurrection. While we often focus on Thomas as the doubter, a closer reading of John 20 reveals that his response was typical of the disciples.

Despite Mary Magdalene proclaiming that she had seen the Lord, the disciples remained fearful and locked behind closed doors. It was only when Jesus showed them his hands and side, as he did with Thomas, that they responded with joy. Yet Jesus did not rebuke them but encouraged them to believe.

4.

Over the past 2000 years, many unnamed Christians have testified to God's love and saving grace through Christ. We have all benefited from their bold witness. Without the disciples' belief in God Incarnate, we would not believe in God who is invisible. Without their vivid experiences of the Risen Christ, we would not have faith in the Risen Christ whom we have never met.

It is now our turn to testify to our faith in the Risen Christ. Although we have not physically seen him since the first disciples, we can testify to his presence and works among us. Like feeling the wind through the shaking of trees and grass, the Spirit of the Risen Christ touches hearts and shakes lives so that people of little faith may believe in him.

The Risen Christ urges us to witness our faith through our actions, not just our words. As John wrote, "*No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us*" (1 John 4:12). By loving and serving our neighbors, especially those in need, we testify to the grace of our Risen Christ.

Friends, I want you to know that your hope in uncertain times, your courage in fearful times, your gratitude in uneasy times, and your love and compassion in times of economic crisis are powerful testimonies to the love and grace of God, who is with us and among us even though invisible. We do not need theological statements to prove the existence of God and His incarnation. If we love one another as Jesus Christ did, all will know that God exists and abides with us. Therefore, my friends in Christ, let us become witnesses to the resurrection of our Lord through our love and service to others.