

April 17, 2016 4th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading; Acts 9: 36-43

Responsive Reading; Psalm 23

2nd Reading Revelations 7: 9-17

Gospel Reading; John 10: 22-30

Sermon Title: DO YOU THINK?

By Rev. James Gardner

They say that seeing believing. That is what they say but that is not always true.

About 5 years ago I was driving truck west bound on the Thru-way. As I got close to the Patersonville Service Area I hit a blinding snowfall. I slowed down and looked for the ramp so I could pull off. I could only see about 20 feet in front of me and I could see a lot of trucks had pulled off the road and parked. Then the parked trucks started passing me and I saw tire tracks going out from in front of my truck.

I knew that I was travelling forward but parked trucks were passing me and my tire tracks were going out in front of me.

When my truck came to rest against one of those “moving parked trucks” I realized that I had been spinning and sliding backwards.

I saw but I did not believe.

When I saw parked trucks passing me and tire tracks going out in front of me I should have realized that I was going backwards but I could not make my brain believe it. Going backwards? Do you think? Duh! Well NOW I do.

Sounds stupid but I am not the first one to be stupid like this.

So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

Jesus had astounded the priests and the scribes when he was 12 years old. Jesus taught with authority not as the scribes. Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, possibly the greatest sermon ever given. Christ gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, healed the lame, drove out demons, made the mute to speak and raised the dead. BUT? Are you the messiah? Tell us plainly.

When I planned to write this message I was thinking that I was going to be very critical of the Jews that asked Jesus this ridiculous question. That was before I remembered my trucking

experience. I guess now I am going to be a little more sympathetic and a little less critical.

I guess that when something is so firmly imprinted into your brain it is a mental block that is nearly impossible to climb over.

The Jews were waiting for a military messiah that would drive out all the enemies of Israel and establish Israel as “The” world power.

He would be a descendant of King David, the King that had unified Israel and Judea. Worldly power was the only power that anyone understood.

I guess the question should have been, “Are you going to evolve your Godly teachings and miracles into the worldly power that we are expecting from the Messiah?” “Because we know that if you ain’t gonna do it, than you ain’t him!”

Blaa! Wrong answer!

In the “Doubting Thomas” story Christ says to Thomas, “Do you believe because you have seen? Blessed are those that have not seen but still believe.”

All of the scriptures today give reinforcement to the fact that we should believe that God is an Awesome and Personal God that proves his existence and love for us over and over.

The Psalm says we have nothing to fear because God is with us, God leads us, God protects us and God will welcome us forever.

The passage from Acts assures us that God works through us and for us and gives us life. This is the passage where Peter is called to the home of Dorcas. Dorcas had been a saint among her community making clothes for the poor. She got sick and died and was placed in an upper room. Peter came, emptied the room and prayed to God for a miracle. He then called her by her other name and said, "Tabitha get up." God raised her from the dead and she took Peter's hand and got up.

Revelation shows us that God will always be with us and will always be worthy of our unending praise and gratitude. This is demonstrated by the large group around God's throne in white robes praising God. John is told that these are the ones that went through major troubles in their lives and were protected by God.

When people ask me if I believe in God my silent reaction is, "Dua, do you think?" I believe so strongly that I have trouble realizing that anyone could help but believe and then I soften up a little. It is a little like someone asking how do you know that your mother really loved you and was not faking it for appearance sake?

Well I can't prove my mother loved me but I know in my heart even more than I know my own name that she did love me. I

know God in the same way. I believe that is the revelation of the Holy Spirit living within me that gives me this absolute certainty and divine trust that makes my whole life worthwhile.

When I got out of that truck and saw where it was and the tracks I knew what had happened even though I could not comprehend it as it was going down.

When I look at the life and miracles of Christ and I also have the advantage of knowing of the crucifixion and resurrection that can answer the question, "Do you think? With the answer, No I know!"

"Because He lives, and because I know he is the Messiah and my savior, I know that I can face tomorrow!"

Hallelujah and Amen.