

***“Both And”***

Sermon for First Christian Church (*Disciples of Christ*) of  
Decatur, Georgia

Easter Sunday, Celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord,  
April 8, 2012

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Holy Scriptures: John 20: 1-18 Acts 10: 34-44

Listen for the Word of God from John 20.

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,*

*Mary Magdalene came to the tomb*

*and saw that the stone had been removed  
from the tomb.*

*2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple,*

*the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them,*

*“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,*

*and we do not know where they have  
laid him.”*

*3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.*

*4 The two were running together,*

*but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.*

*5 He bent down to look in*

*and saw the linen wrappings lying there,*

*but he did not go in.*

*6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.*

*He saw the linen wrappings lying there,*

*7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head,*

*not lying with the linen wrappings*

*but rolled up in a place by itself.*

*8 Then the other disciple,*

*who reached the tomb first,*

*also went in,*

*and he saw and believed...*

*He saw and believed...*

Early on the first day of the week, on an Easter Sunday, while it was still dark,

ten-year-old Chad Everett awoke and found a lump on his body.

He saw the lump and believed that something was wrong, terribly wrong.

Chad showed the lump to his mother,

and she, too, believed that something was not right with her son.

She immediately made plans to get him to the hospital.

She bundled all her children in the family car

and sped to the closest emergency room.

The doctors on call examined Chad

and determined that the lump – a cancerous growth -- called for surgery.

While his family prayed in the waiting room,

Chad was given anesthesia and the procedure began.

Two hours later the family looked up as the doctors entered the waiting room.

The head surgeon said,

*“I am so sorry. Chad passed away. We did*

*everything we could.”*

Stricken with grief and shock,

Mrs. Everett and her children walked soundlessly toward the elevators.

Suddenly they heard Chad’s voice, yelling,  
*“Momma! Momma!”*

The doctors froze, stunned.

Mrs. Everett yelled, *“That is my Chad! He is alive!”*

The doctors turned on their heels and ran back into surgery,  
where they found a very much alive Chad.

The next morning when Chad awoke

the nurses and doctors slowly, gently gathered around his hospital bedside.

They wondered aloud if he had any memories of what transpired the day before.

Here is what the ten-year-old shared.

*“I was on the surgical table and felt a lot of pain.*

*Then I was above the table, like I was hovering over my body.*

*I saw the doctors and the lights, but the pain was gone.*

*Then I was in a field, and the field was covered with flowers.*

*I could hear birds singing.*

*And I looked up and Jesus was walking beside me, holding my hand.*

*We were walking together toward a bright light, and it was warm and felt nice.*

*Jesus said to me, "I want you to come with me."*

*I said to Him, "I want to go home to my Momma."*

*Jesus said, "Alright. You may. I will come again for you soon."*

*And then, Chad told the doctors,*

*I felt myself leaving that warm light and pretty field*

*and with the speed of a rocket ship*

*I was back in my body and I felt the pain again."*

Chad's story does not end there.

His life after life experience gave birth to a new beginning and a new hope.

Upon recovery from the surgery

and bravely coping with the challenges of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma,

Chad informed his family that they were going to church.

His family was not particularly spiritual

nor did they practice any religious disciplines.

Chad insisted that they get up the next Sunday morning

and go to the nearest church.

They walked through the neighborhood and entered the first steeple they found.

And that is how Chad Everett and his mother and brothers and sisters

came to join East Dallas Christian Church

and become a part of a loving church family.

My wife Betty and I were both on staff as Associate Pastors,

and we loved them and they us.

Interestingly, Chad never once shared out loud his story;

he never once talked about his life after life experience,

nor did he speak about his encounter with Christ,

nor of the the trials and pains of living with cancer.

He simply did not talk about himself;

however he lived out his love for God

with a blessed assurance of the faith and trust  
he had

that Jesus loved him,

that Jesus walked with him and  
held his hand,

and that one day, one day  
soon,

Jesus would come  
back to bring him home.

You see, Chad looked up and saw Jesus,

and he believed the promise Jesus made to him,

that one day he would come for him.

Jesus allowed that for now Chad could be with his family and  
beloved

he could walk on earth and bring people to an  
encounter with the holy,

and that the day would surely come

when the promise of an eternity with  
God in the afterlife

would come to be.

Maybe that is why Chad walked among us

with such a calm demeanor and a spiritual urgency.

He was determined to use his gift from God

to help his family to have an encounter with the holy  
for them to see and believe as he did  
that the tomb is empty and our Savior  
has Risen.

Jesus Christ waits to raise us,  
as well, from the dead into new life and new beings.

The next Easter Sunday,  
on the one year anniversary of his emergency surgery,  
Chad and his 14-year-old sister were baptized  
and confessed their faith in Christ.

Revelation 21: 1-5 is a beloved passage of Scripture

that is often read when we are baptized, when we  
celebrate restoration,

when we put aside the old and say, “*God, make  
me like new!*”

when we let go of our old ways and rise  
with Christ,

when we see and both believe  
God and believe in God,

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;*



*for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,*

*and the sea was no more.*

*<sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,*

*coming down out of heaven from God,*

*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*<sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,*

*“See, the home of God is among mortals.*

*He will dwell with them as their God;*

*they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;*

*<sup>4</sup>he will wipe every tear from their eyes.*

*Death will be no more;*

*mourning and crying and pain will be no more,*

*for the first things have passed away.”*

*<sup>5</sup>And the one who was seated on the throne said,*

*“See, I am making all things new.” (Revelation 21:1-*

*5)*

The Book of Revelation is well named.

“...Christianity is a revealed religion.

You can't see it until it is revealed, given to you,

until one has experienced the gift of the  
presence of the Risen Christ,

and then one's eyes get into focus.

That is Easter.

The good news of Easter wasn't just that Jesus was raised  
from the dead.

It was that he was raised for us.

He returned to his friends, revealed himself to them,

and enabled them to see and believe.”[1]

“I believe that deep, life-changing Christian belief

is based not on arguments and reasons

but upon encounter with the Risen Christ.”[2]

Open your eyes and hearts and minds

so that you may have an encounter with the Risen  
Christ.

Sure, you can go to the tomb and see that it is empty.

Yes indeed, you can die on a surgical table and have a life  
after life experience.

Another option for you would be to decide to have an encounter with Jesus.

See and believe God;

see and believe in God.

Believe God.

Trust God.

Have faith that God loves you.

Be assured that God loves you and walks with you.

He has promised to be with you always and will come for you again one day.

Believe in God.

Encounter the holy in your life.

See the presence of God in your relationships.

Follow and practice the spiritual disciplines.

Connect with Christ in the Body of Christ,

the church, a vibrant and meaningful community of faith

created by Christ and sustained by the Holy  
Spirit

for building the domain of God on earth  
as it is in heaven.

Two years after Chad was sent back to earth by Jesus

to walk with us and show us the way to love God and  
love one another,

to both trust God's promise

and to practice our trust in community,

Jesus returned as he had  
promised,

and called Chad home

to live with him in  
life everlasting.

Church and family united in our sadness and loss.

We grieved, we wept, we celebrated, we told stories about  
Chad,

and then we went to the cemetery.

We watched as his body was lowered into the ground.

To our shock and amazement

when we looked into the tomb  
we saw that it was empty;  
his soul was not there.

And the whole people of God believed.

*All power be to the Creator, the Son and the Holy  
Spirit. Amen!*

[1] William Willimon, Pulpit Resource, 2011, p. 15

[2] Ibid, p. 16.