

**Problem: Easter is too “out there” to believe.**

-During one of my summers in college I worked at a T-shirt and concessionary shop in West Glacier just outside of Glacier National Park. It was an incredible, life changing summer. But that's not exactly what I want to tell you about. As you can probably imagine, any organization that is staffed by mostly seasonal college age employees, there is going to be at least a little bit of shenanigans taking place. There certainly was at the West Glacier Mercantile Company. I remember, specifically, on Saturdays that my new friend, Haley, who was attending University of Utah and getting her theater degree, and me were usually the only ones staffing the shop. We both began to notice the typical questions that were asked by customers coming through: What kind of wild life is there in the park? What is so important about Logan Pass? Where can we go to see wildlife? These questions came again and again and again always, of course, when the shop was really slow and there was nothing else to do to get out of having to give the same answers. So one day, Haley told me that she was going to try to make up an animal and try to convince a park goer that it actually exists. A little while later, a group of retired ladies came into the shop and popped the question: What can we see on Logan Pass? "Well," said Haley. "There's an animal that just came out of hibernation and is only found in Glacier National Park on Logan Pass. You might see it." Really? They said. What is it? *Catrabbit*. Actually, *Catrabbituam*, but "catrabbit" for short, she said flashing a grin to me. She then went into how Catrabbits hop like rabbits but are stealthy like cats, how they are both active at night and during the day, and how they have ears like a bunny but whiskers like a cat. Two of the women didn't look convinced, whispered to one another, and left. One of the women, however, asked all kinds of questions and explained she was going to talk to the ranger about Catrabbits. I continue to this day to feel a little sorry for these college age shenanigans, and a little for these women, but especially the ranger who got asked about Catrabbits. It was all pretty far fetched.

-And maybe, this Easter Sunday, we are a little afraid that we, too, might be gullible like this woman in the West Glacier T-Shirt shop. Jesus Christ rising from the dead? No way! That's too crazy and out there! It doesn't make sense! How do we know someone is not making it up like my friend Haley making up the fictitious *Catrabbit* of Glacier National Park?

**Solution: “Remembering” can Jesus makes the bullshit of Easter real.**

-If you feel secretly that the whole message of Easter is a little “out there”, fear not! For, the disciples had the same feeling upon hearing from Mary and Joanna. Infact, it's almost comical how our bible translation waters down their response to a G-rated level. “But these words seemed to them an idle tale” (verse 11). The Greek word that is used is *leros*, a slang term, which is used only here in the whole New Testament. It's meaning is literally: crap, garbage, bulls\*t. It's bullshit! Jesus can't be raised from the dead, that's too far out there!

-Indeed if we look at the women's success rate at sharing this story, we see it's not stellar. Where do they go to proclaim that Christ is risen? Not to the street corner, but to their closest friends and community, the ones who have been praying for this guy not to be dead, the ones who have the greatest chance of believing this “out there” claim. And yet, they say: that's bullshit. 1 in 11 (Judas was not there) actually went to the tomb.

That's a 9% success rate.. The rest of the disciples stayed home. Not great by any stretch.

-"There is kind of a logic in this story that says: we are not supposed to be believed." - Anna Carter Florence, Professor at Columbia Theological Seminary.

-Because the Easter story that we have to tell is so out there, so crazy, that even the people that are most close to us, that maybe love us most, won't believe us.

-Anna Carter Florence continues: "Because if the dead won't even stay dead, what is there to count on? If the world is so upside down that dead stuff doesn't even stay dead, how am I gonna live?"

-This is hard, out there, stuff that can rock us to the core. We don't want to be the gullible one like that woman in the T-shirt shop in West Glacier who fell for a joke. I know for myself that I want to be the intelligent, smart-one that has it all together. But, believing in the risen Christ requires us, I think, to take a leap and trust a story that many others say *leros* (bullcrap) to.

**Implication: We are called to be apostles and proclaim Easter, even if many think we are crazy.**

-So, how do we take this leap to actually trust and retell this out-there story?

-One thing that is very weird, but important, in this whole story is who is missing. Jesus! (well, sort of). We talk of this crazy story of Jesus' resurrection and Jesus isn't even physically present in the story. That's not very helpful. However, there is something that happens in verses 6-8 which is key: The angels say, "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. Then they remembered his words." Jesus is present in their remembering.

-This act of remembering is the church's business and something that is key to helping us trust a crazy, out-there Easter reality. It is what we will do in a little while at Holy Communion. In gathering together for this holy sacrament, we can remember the word made flesh becoming alive again. It's an act that can ground us in how God works in and loves this world, a world that doesn't make much sense. In a world that is so topsy turvy and is so out there that even death can't be relied upon, remembering can become the true foundation that our faith has to cling to.

-Remembering is what moves the women from fear to being apostles. I think the same is true for us. It takes a lot of guts to go out there and say "I have seen the risen Christ". It's a crazy, out-there claim, that doesn't make a lot of sense. But, by remembering together God's promise that death is not the end, our telling of this story doesn't have to be filled with fear. By remembering and grounding ourselves in God's word, God can change people's lives and the world through us.

-May the risen Christ be with us through the bullcrap as we remember and proclaim the out-there, crazy story of Easter.

Amen.