

## Sermon on 15.04.05 at Hannover International Worship

Mark 16, 9-20

**Dear brothers and sisters!**

We live in the time when logic is more important than belief. The English speaking people say “*seeing is believing*.” It is difficult to accept this saying as a basic truth. Maybe this proverb came after the Age of Enlightenment, when rationalism has given way to scepticism. I do not have a problem to think rationally, but I have problem of defining every thing from a rational point of view and forgetting the role of belief in the life of a person. We cannot rationalise every thing that we perceive and find truth. Even Albert Einstein said “**everything is relative and there is no absolute truth**”.

For those people who try to rationalise everything, it is difficult to accept the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our text deals with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to see and believe the resurrection with our own eyes, but we believe it. Thus one can think that “**believing is also seeing**”. This can be a new reality for those who would enter the spiritual dimension of faith.

Jesus’ resurrection is one event in which both elements of seeing and believing come together. His resurrection is verified by the eye witness testimony of hundreds of His day. But now we believe it by faith. The scripture says *we walk by faith not by sight*. It is only through our faith, that our spiritual blind eyes can be opened so that we can truly see.

According to the resurrection story recorded by Mark, Jesus, whom his friends, his family, and indeed all of Jerusalem, thought dead, was raised

to life and he appeared to people. He presented himself to Peter who denied him; to Thomas who doubted him; to Mary who wept for him; He visited his friends, He talked with his followers.

The first day of Easter was an incredible day, one that started with disbelief, with fear, trembling, and ended with astonishment, excitement and thanksgiving. What strikes us about the resurrection day is the disbelief of the disciples. They saw Jesus healing the sick, calming the storm and doing wonders. He told them about his death and resurrection. Despite all this, they became unbelievers when Jesus died. When Jesus died their hopes died, their convictions died, indeed their faith died.

The other striking story of resurrection is that the resurrection was first discovered - not by Peter upon whom the church is founded, but by two women, who went to the tomb to finish the job of burying Jesus. No one expected the resurrection. It was difficult to believe what these women told.

Dear fellow brothers and sisters in Christ!

Resurrection is the central message of our today's text. Therefore I want ask a question about resurrection. **“What are we going to do with the message of resurrection?”** We will find our answer to this question in the story of resurrection written in the Gospel of Mark and we can do three things.

## **1. We have to believe it**

In Mark 16, from 9-14 we read the story as follows:

“Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. And when they heard that He was alive, and He had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. And after that, He appeared in different forms to two of them, while they were walking along on their way to the country. And they went away and reported it to others, but they did not believe them either.”

Believing in the resurrection is the most important message of this text. The resurrection is the centre of our faith. It is the foundation of our Christian experience, and it is the goal towards which our lives move. The resurrection is of first importance to us, not because it is a nice ending to the story of Jesus, but because it is the beginning of our story, a story in which our faith can triumph over death just as the faith of Jesus did.

As Christians, we are urged over and over again to trust in and accept the reality of the resurrection and to make it a part of our lives through faith in the one who rose from the dead.

We are a people who are called to believe in the power and the love of God to bring goodness out of evil; life out of death; and hope out of despair.

As Christians we are promised that our lives will be blessed, and that we will be a blessing to others, when we trust and believe in the resurrection. We are promised that what we believe will make a difference to us; and indeed it does.

Africans like telling stories, so let me tell you a story.

Once upon a time a man found the egg of an eagle. It had been abandoned for some reason by its mother, but as it was still warm the man took it and put it in the nest of one of his backyard chickens along with the other eggs that were there being brooded upon. After a period of time the eagle was hatched, and along with the other chicks from his nest began to go about the backyard doing what the other chicks did. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He looked for the corn that the man would throw into the yard. He clucked and cackled as best as he could, and as he grew, he would, like the other chickens, thrash his wings and fly a few feet in the air. Years passed in this way and the eagle grew very old. One day he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. It glided majestically among the powerful wind currents, soaring and swooping, scarcely beating its long golden wings.

The old eagle looked at it in awe and asked "what is that?"

"That is the eagle, the king of the birds", said one of his neighbours. "He belongs to the sky and to the high places. We belong to the earth, we are chickens." The old eagle knew this was true. But he believed that he himself is a chicken and cannot fly

like an eagle. So he lived and died as a chicken, for that is what he believed he was. **A person is what she or he believes.**

If we believe that we will be resurrected and live for ever, then we are Christians who have hope and live for ever.

## **2. We have to proclaim this good news of Resurrection**

The resurrection story goes further and reads:

“And after He appeared to the eleven as they were reclining at table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of their heart, because they have not believed those who had seen him after He had risen. And He said to them, **go into the entire world and preach the Gospel to all creation. He who believes and has been baptised shall be saved;** but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (VV 15-16).

Think my friends of what happened to the disciples after the first Easter morning, after they finally accepted and believed in the resurrection that Christ had told them about. They came out of the upper room where they had huddled in fear, and they went to the ends of the earth, and they created a mighty church despite the efforts of emperors and princes who wanted to destroy them.

They went from being people afraid of dying, to being people who offered their very lives to help others. The disciples proclaimed what they believed. They had joy and hope that others could see from them. We can also proclaim what we believe.

### 3. We have to live according to the message we proclaim

In Verses 17 through 20 we read

“And these signs will accompany those who have believed: In My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. So then when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them; He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the Word by the signs that followed”

Christianity is not only preaching the Gospel, but also living the Gospel. The power of the Gospel changes us first before it changes the world. We can cast out demons of our world by committing our selves to stopping the devilish acts of the dictators, who oppress the poor and destroy peace. We can tell those who use religion as their instruments for their hidden motives that God is not on their side.

We do not necessarily speak in tongue and attempt to speak new languages. For me speaking in tongue could mean speaking the language that is being missed from the world. Speaking together **the language of peace for all that the church could not say more today**. Tell the politicians the message of peace that Jesus brought to God's nature.

We do not need to understand the Bible literally and drink poison. No not at all. But we have to work to change poisons to medicine to save others. I understand it this way. Our hands must be stretched to help those who

are physically sick, who are socially sick, and who are politically sick and see no peace. I tell you, we are living in a sick world that needs to be healed. This world needs to be free from fear. The Good news of Resurrection makes us free. This world needs to be changed and be the better place, where all nations, nationalities and religions have peace between themselves. We must overcome the evil actions. The resurrection has overcome the power of evil actions. We need to live the message of resurrection. We need to be changed and be agents of the changes in this world.

The disciples were changed by their faith in the resurrection and in the God who brought it about: they were given power to heal and to help others. The power to conquer their own fear and despair and power to defeat the fear and despair that afflicts others. This is what the resurrection is about, what our faith is about.

We believe in God, who can bring back to life that which has died. God can bring good out of evil, love out of hate, and hope out of despair. This is what we believe; proclaim, live and make a difference.

Praise be to God our Father who raises the dead to life,  
Praise be to Jesus the Son who shares his life with the faithful,  
and Praise be to the Spirit who makes one with him. Amen