

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

April 14, 2024

First Reading: Acts 3: 12-19

Responsive Reading: Psalm 4

Epistle Reading: 1 John 3: 1-7

Gospel Reading: Luke 24: 36-48

Sermon:

## **Why Do Doubts Arise In Your Hearts?**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Those things that which God foretold by His prophets; He has fulfilled.

Why is it that we seem to be so ready to recognize storybook characters but so slow to recognize the real thing?

Those of us who watched TV in the fifties knew just what was coming when we heard, "Look up in the sky, it's a bird, it's a plane, it's Superman! Up, up and away! Faster than a speeding bullet! More powerful than a locomotive! Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound! This looks like a job for Superman!

Time for Truth, Justice and the American Way!” Rah! Rah! Rah!  
We all knew what was coming. No doubts arose in our minds.  
But when Jesus appeared in the upper room in our Gospel  
lesson and said, “Peace to you.” The disciples were terrified and  
thought they had seen a spirit.

Jesus said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do  
doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet.”  
Then Jesus asked for some food, and He ate it right there in  
front of them to prove that He was the real thing.

Why do people look right at Jesus and not see Him? It  
happened to Mary at the open tomb, and it was not until He  
called her by name did she recognize Him. On the road to  
Emmaus Jesus talked with two of His disciples and they did not  
see Him until He broke bread with them. I think that we all do  
this from time to time, or we see acts of God and credit to the  
person closest to the action.

Just prior to our reading from Acts, Peter along with John had  
just healed a crippled man by “the name of Jesus Christ.” Peter,  
responding to those who flocked in to see these miracle men  
said, “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why do you  
look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness  
we had made this man walk?” These people were looking at  
God but not seeing God but rather seeing the results of God.

God was acting through Peter and John. God does that. God can and does act through anyone or anything He chooses.

In 1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 1-7, John acknowledges this by pointing out, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed...but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

OK, a bunch of words. Basically, John is saying that since God has made us children of God, we should start living up to the family name. We should avoid lawlessness and know God. “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”

In other words, being a child of God, if you are trying your best, your very best, you are going to get the stamp of approval from your Father in Heaven even if you are not perfect.

A little disclaimer here. If you practice righteousness in God’s name you are righteous but, if you do it in your own name the contract is null and void! Keep that little piece of advice in mind.

Look around you and see God. He is everywhere. He is in the sunset, He is in the baby or grandbaby on the other side of the

nursery window, He is in that little child that runs over to an elderly person and picks up what ever they just dropped. He is in that elderly couple holding hands and walking slowly through a garden. God is everywhere. Sometimes seeing Him makes you happy as in “I saw God today” when a man taking a break from a long hospital vigil sees a flower growing up through a crack in the sidewalk. Sometimes seeing God makes you cry, cry right along with God. I would like to share the words of a song written about an event that happened during the Battle of Fredericksburg.

*Some had on the rebel grey, some the Union blue,  
They were fathers, sons and brothers, men like me and you.  
Engaged in heavy battle, till there came that cloudy draw,  
When silence took the battlefield men just stood in awe.*

*Some say it was the cannon smoke some say the Northern  
Lights,  
That cast a ghostly image over Fredericksburg that night,  
Some say it was God’s Spirit lookin’ o’er the bloody sod,  
But that rainbow mist that filled the sky, was the tears of God.*

*Both sides read His Holy Word and believed it in their hearts,  
But the common ground He'd blessed them with had now been  
torn apart.*

*Covered by the blood they shed so many lost their lives,  
The fight on that Virginia hill was enough to make Him cry.*

*Some say it was the cannon smoke, some say the Northern  
Lights,*

*That cast a ghostly image over Fredericksburg that night,*

*Some say it was God's Spirit looking o'er the bloody sod,*

*But the rainbow mist that filled the sky, was the tears of God.*

This is entitled Tears of God. If you would like to hear it  
beautifully sung Google, Tears of God by Josh Turner.

Jesus said, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I  
was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were  
written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms  
concerning Me. Thus, it is written, and thus it was necessary for  
the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and  
that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His  
name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

We are the children of God. Let us live up to the family name. As our bulletin cover says, “Let the flowers of Christ’s Garden fill the world with His love.” You are the flowers of His garden, bloom where you are planted, and the tears of God will be tears of joy.

Hallelujah and Amen!