

THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

MARK 16:1-7

One hundred years ago few people thought it possible that man could fly. No one except the two sons of Rev. Milton Wright who at 10:35 on the morning of Dec. 17, 1903, made their first successful flight of 175 feet in an airplane driven by a four-cylinder combustion engine. Today we fly much more sophisticated crafts around the moons of Jupiter. It was very hard to believe 100 years ago but the evidence of that first flight is all around us today.

Two hundred years ago, the borders of the United States stretched from the Atlantic to the Mississippi river and none other than Napoleon Bonaparte in France granted her the rights to trade on the Mississippi, and she held the right to impose a duty on every ship that sailed out of the mouth of the Mississippi in New Orleans. What made matters worse is that it looked like Napoleon was going to close the rights to the Mississippi to the Americans entirely. There was no way to expect Napoleon to give up this kind of control. But a U.S. ambassador to France, Robert R. Livingston, concocted a plan to trump Napoleon, and he played that trump with a flourish. He made it known in the right circles that the United States was considering settling its difference with Great Britain and reconciling with her politically. This Napoleon did not want. He was already close to war with England. So when James Monroe, who would later become president, along with Livingston, approached Napoleon's men with the idea of a land treaty, they agreed. And on May 2, 1803, the Louisiana Purchase was made for three cents an acre. The humor in it all is this: Livingston and Monroe were never commissioned to make such a purpose. But now standing on the eastern banks of the Mississippi River 200 years ago it was hard to believe that the US would ever have the rights to that 828,000 square mile area. But it doubled the size of the United States, and the evidence of that great purchase is all around us today.

Three hundred Wesley in Epworth, England. It was perhaps no surprise that John grew up to become a priest himself. What was a surprise is the kind of ministry he implemented. He formed a small religious study group, which put special emphasis on methodical study and devotion. They had communion often, fasted twice a week, and as they grew they added other things: social services, visiting prisoners, care for the poor, and they even ran a school. Onlookers called them Methodist and it wasn't a polite term, it was said to mock them. When John left the group, it disintegrated. But the name stuck and the evidence of that early movement is all around us today. In almost every town in this country there is a Methodist Church.

There are events in life that amaze us, fill us with joy, and make us wonder whether it really is possible. It is hard to believe, even standing on this side of history, that some of these things were ever accomplished. They are impossible stories that positively happened.

Two thousand years ago, 11 men gathered to discuss in private their next move. They were frightened and confused. Life seemed to be closing in on them and it was not possible for them to continue their three-year-old ministry. Here were the facts: They were betrayed by one of their own. The crowds had turned on them. Their leader had been executed. They had denied their relationship to their leader. And any further development of their leader's ideas would almost certainly mean their own deaths. Into this hopeless scene walks a man they never expected to see. They were so startled by this event that, to a man, they feared they were seeing a ghost. The

resurrection amazed them, filled them with joy, and turned their lives around. It's an impossible story that positively happened and the evidence of the resurrection is all around us today.

What amazes you about the resurrection of Jesus? What impossible aspects of it fill you with joy? Let us give thanks for the evidence all around us today of the resurrection of Jesus. &

God bless,
Pastor Barbara