

THE MAGNOLIA MESSENGER

Volume 3 Issue 17

April 18, 2021



Special points of interest:

- * “Doubting in the Darkness”
- * Crossword — *Animals and More!*
- * Announcements — The Easter Season, Family Worship, and more!
- * “Global Collaberation”
- * Liturgical Colors and Misc.



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Doubting in the Darkness

Last Sunday morning, we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord, and as wonderful as that was, our Bible passage for last Sunday left the disciples wondering what had happened that morning. But that all changes this week as the disciples moved from the darkness of doubt to the light of belief!

John 20:19-31 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” ²⁴ Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” ²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” ³⁰ And

truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

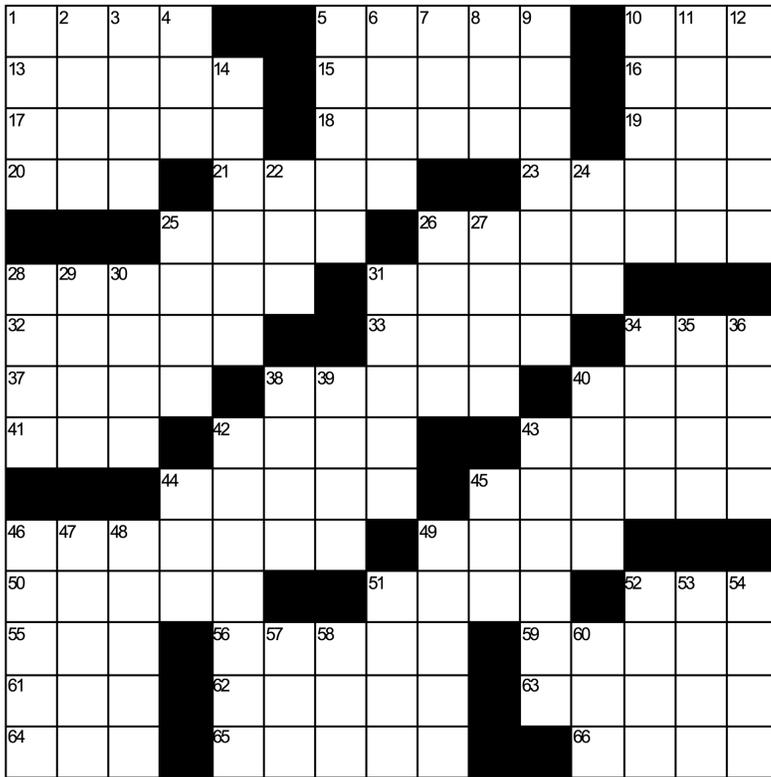
It has been told that *Edward Wood, aka the Viscount of Halifax (1934-1944)*, former foreign secretary of Great Britain, once shared a railway compartment with two prim-looking spinsters. A few moments before reaching his destination, the train passed through a tunnel. In the utter darkness, Halifax kissed the back of his hand noisily several times. When the train drew into the station, he rose, lifted his hat, and in a gentlemanly way said: “*May I thank whichever one of you two ladies I am indebted to for the charming incident in the tunnel.*” He then beat a hasty retreat, leaving the two ladies glaring at each other.

Being in the dark can cause us to miss some terribly important things, can't it? As these two ladies glared at each other, they had their doubts of what had just occurred because they were inadvertently sitting in the dark. Had they been in the light the entire time, they would have seen the truth of what had transpired. Staying in the light allows us to see the truth more clearly, but sometimes we voluntarily place ourselves in the darkness! It's true for us, and it was just as true for the Disciples as well...

Let's backtrack to that morning and see if we can fill in some of the details...

It was resurrection morning, and the ladies had bravely ventured forth to anoint the body of Jesus. And as a result

Animals and More — Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 1 Crooked
- 5 Canned chili brand
- 10 Car speed
- 13 Singing group
- 15 Lucky number
- 16 Wrath
- 17 Animal known for its big mouth
- 18 Not inner
- 19 Neither's partner
- 20 Bard's before
- 21 The ostrich is one that doesn't fly
- 23 Operatic bass
- 25 Chose
- 26 Hen
- 28 Silken
- 31 Swimming ___ (plr.)
- 32 Jams
- 33 Swiss mountains
- 34 Women's undergarment
- 37 Famous cookies
- 38 Revises

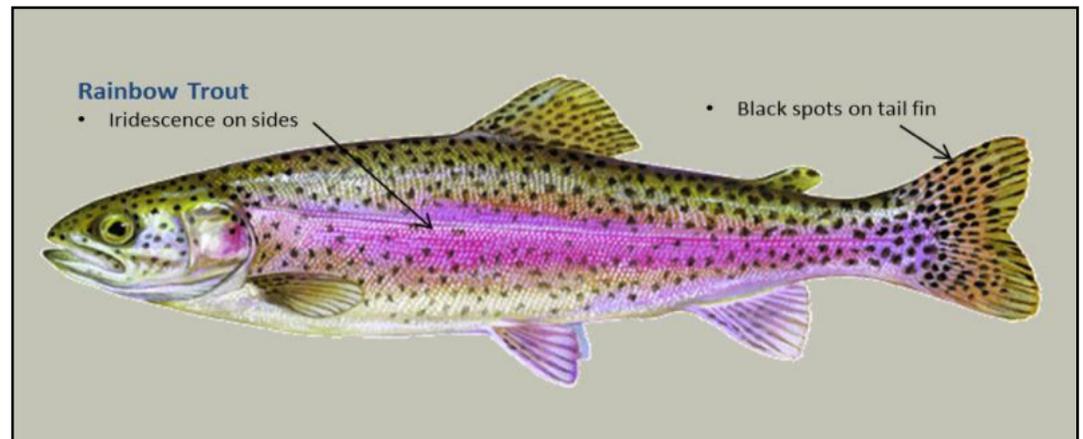
- 40 Comes from sheep
- 41 Lab animal
- 42 Vale
- 43 Rainbow fish [See subtle hint below!]
- 44 A small, gray, furry, burrowing mammals
- 45 Musical "fast"
- 46 Elderly woman of wealth
- 49 Hurt
- 50 Great ape
- 51 baby cow
- 52 Central Intelligence Agency

- 55 Affirmation
- 56 Calms
- 59 Kings
- 61 Dozens
- 62 Painter Richard
- 63 Cain's eldest son
- 64 Vane direction
- 65 Marsh plant
- 66 Pottery ingredient

- 29 ___ matter
- 30 Beep
- 31 Aches
- 34 Sounds of disapproval
- 35 Root
- 36 Singing voice
- 38 Women's magazine
- 39 Hunter's delight
- 40 Small Bird
- 42 Swimming glasses
- 43 Toy with
- 44 Guy
- 45 Chum
- 46 Creator of Sherlock Holmes
- 47 Sandwich cookies brand
- 48 Blow
- 49 Out of style
- 51 Horse fly
- 52 Not warm
- 53 S.A. Indian
- 54 Ashen
- 57 Utilize
- 58 Limited (abbr.)
- 60. Incorporated (abbr.)

DOWN

- 1 Hurt
- 2 Make a whizzing sound
- 3 Twined fibers
- 4 Shrill bark of a dog
- 5 Bird that brings babies
- 6 Cause to be heard
- 7 Artist's creation
- 8 "To the right!"
- 9 Hamster-like pets
- 10 Capital of Byelorussia
- 11 Expressive style
- 12 Blue ___, water bird
- 14 Red breasted birds
- 22 Freezing
- 24 American Cancer Society (abbr.)
- 25 Animals with a messy reputation
- 26 Young horse
- 27 Jumps on one foot
- 28 Former wound



April 2021 News and Announcements



Has your life somehow taken a turn for the worse? Do you feel like your dreams and aspirations have been crushed and gone forever? Does it feel like your life, as you desired it, is over?

If so, then you are not alone and not without a new hope!

This meme* showed up in a recent Reddit feed and I thought it was great! I hope you get some inspiration from it also! This brief message might be for you or someone you love!



Some folks have felt this way for a long time and, as a result, have felt hopeless to the point of depression. By the way, you might not be able to tell by looking at them, but it is real nonetheless. Is it really true that there is no hope for a new and better day? In **2 Corinthians 5:17**, we read, *“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”*

This “new life” is spiritual in its core even so, we can still be left with some emotional, spiritual, and physical baggage to tote along. Some folks can easily deal with these emotions, while others, through no fault of their own, simply cannot let

these burdens slip away like Calgon’s promise to take us away to wonderland!

So, what can we do when the hopes, dreams, and desires that have motivated us are gone?

(1) We can stay gloomy and sad. [Hint - not a good option. ask me how I know!]

(2) We can resign ourselves to our sad lot in life and trudge through life until we go home to glory.

(3) We can start over with new purpose and goals! But even if we start over, we do not do so from scratch! We can start over with the wisdom, knowledge, and vast experience we have amassed through our faith in God and throughout our lives!

My hope and prayer is that we all opt for the third choice!

However, if you are feeling blue, depressed, and hopeless then talk to someone before the temporary blue feeling turns into something bigger. You always have a caring, listening, and non-judgmental ear in our church

Blessings,

Pastor Gary

* **“Meme”** (/mi:m/ MEEM) — an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture Memes (discrete units of knowledge, gossip, jokes and so on) are to culture what genes are to life.

Crossword Puzzle Solution - “Animals and More”

A	W	R	Y			S	T	A	G	G		M	P	H				
C	H	O	I	R		T	H	R	E	E		I	R	E				
H	I	P	P	O		O	U	T	E	R		N	O	R				
E	R	E			B	I	R	D			B	A	S	S	O			
					P	I	C	K			C	H	I	C	K	E	N	
S	A	T	I	N	Y				P	O	O	L	S					
C	L	O	G	S					A	L	P	S			B	R	A	
A	M	O	S			E	D	I	T	S			W	O	O	L		
R	A	T				G	L	E	N				T	R	O	U	T	
						M	O	L	E	S			P	R	E	S	T	O
D	O	W	A	G	E	R			P	A	I	N						
O	R	A	N	G					C	A	L	F			C	I	A	
Y	E	S				L	U	L	L	S			L	I	O	N	S	
L	O	T				E	S	T	E	S			E	N	O	C	H	
E	S	E				S	E	D	G	E				C	L	A	Y	

Doubting in the Darkness

of their love and faithfulness, Mary Magdalene was not only blessed with becoming the first to see Jesus raised from the dead, but she also became the very first evangelist, proclaiming that Christ had risen!

Meanwhile, the disciples were hiding behind locked doors in fear of the Jewish leaders. I don't know what thoughts might have been going through their heads, but fear and hopelessness were probably contending for the top spot in their minds! And as they were wondering if their fate would be the same as their master's, there came a frantic knocking at the door. When they opened it, they were greeted by a wide-eyed and very excited Mary Magdalene. She was probably out of breath as she told them the good news of her face-to-face encounter with Jesus, a Jesus who was not only up and walking around in the Garden, but one who also had some very important words of instruction for them! According to *Mark* and *Luke*, most of the disciples didn't believe her report, and maybe we wouldn't have believed it either! Well, at least Peter and John must have taken her story somewhat seriously, because they raced to the garden tomb to see what they could see. When they got there, they saw the empty tomb, just as Mary had said, and when John entered the tomb, he saw the linen cloths, and he believed. Precisely what he believed, we don't know for sure, but later that day, all of the disciples would have their own personal encounter with Jesus, and this would remove any and all doubts!

Let's consider the scene from later that day. It was evening on that same resurrection Sunday, and the doors to the place where the disciples had been hiding were locked! They were probably talking about the empty tomb and wondering if the story that Mary and the other ladies had told them could be true, when suddenly Jesus came and stood there in the midst of them! This glorious scene reminds me of Jesus' words from *Matthew 18:20* where He said, "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*" And before their panic levels could rise and further, He gave them a familiar and calming greeting, "*Peace be unto you.*" (*Verse 19*) Jesus then showed them His hands and His feet so that they would know that it was He who was with them. And John reports that they were glad to see the Lord!

Then some powerful things happened:

- (1) Jesus said, "Boo!"
- (2) Jesus then called them out for abandoning Him at the most agonizing time in His Life!
- (3) He scolded Peter for His triple denial!

No, that's not Jesus' way! Here's what happened:

- (1) **Peace** — Jesus said, "*Peace be unto you*" one more time! (*Verse 21*) I don't believe that Jesus forgot that He just told them that very same greeting. This was Jesus bestowing on them His peace. In **John 14:27**, we read, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
- (2) **Commissioning** — "*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*" (*21*)
- (3) **Born Again** — "*And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'*" (*Verse 22*) At this, they received newness of life." To me, this harkens back to **Genesis 2:7** where God breathed into the nose of Adam the breath of life and he "*became a living being.*"
- (4) **Forgiveness** — "*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*" (**V.23**)
 - This is perhaps the most challenging verse of the group!
 - Were they, or are we, able to forgive sins?

Doubting in the Darkness

- If you're like me, the words of *Mark 2:7* are surfacing like a submarine running out of oxygen!

What does that mean? God alone can forgive sins in this way, but Jesus was getting at something else.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to proclaim the gospel of peace. He commissioned them to tell that forgiveness of sins is by grace through faith. They could have the assurance of Jesus to tell those who accepted Jesus and His forgiveness that their sins were forgiven. They were likewise able to tell those who rejected Jesus that their sins were retained.

Bottom Line — This verse does not teach that Jesus' followers have the power to forgive sins in a salvific sense, but the power to proclaim forgiveness!

The disciples saw, and they believed, but for some reason, *Thomas* wasn't with them that night. When they later saw Thomas, "*The other disciples...said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."* **John 20:25**

Don't be too hard on Thomas; he only asked for the same evidence that he gave the others.

Fast-forward to the following Sunday evening, which would have been 8 days later, counting both Sundays, when Thomas was there. Knowing Thomas' request, Jesus offered up His pierced side, and nail-scarred hands to him as proof of His identity, and Thomas uttered one of the most profound proclamations of Jesus' identity as God in human flesh that one can find in Holy Scripture... "*Thomas said, 'My Lord and My God.'*" "*Jesus [then] said unto him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" (**John 20:29**)

This verse stuck out to me because all of us belong to the second category of which Jesus spoke; we are those who have not seen Him and yet believed. We are blessed indeed! But even so, do you occasionally feel like a Doubting Thomas? For many of us, the answer is "Yes," and the words of Norman Shirk of *Dallas Theological Seminary* sums it up quite nicely...

Let me meet you on the mountain, Lord, Just once.

You wouldn't have to burn a whole bush.

Just a few smoking branches

And I would surely be...your Moses.

Let me meet you on the water, Lord, Just once.

It wouldn't have to be on White Rock Lake.

Just on a puddle after the annual Dallas rain

And I would surely be...your Peter.

Let me meet you on the road, Lord, Just once.

You wouldn't have to blind me on North Central Expressway.

Just a few bright lights on the way to chapel

And I would surely be...your Paul.

Let me meet you, Lord, Just once.

Anywhere. Anytime.

Just meeting you in the Word is so hard sometimes

Must I always be...your Thomas?

As you have probably learned by now, just meeting God in the Word is often difficult. Still, we occasionally have the pesky habit of unnecessarily increasing the challenge and thus wind up doubting in the dark!

Global Collaboration: The Birth of World Christianity

By **Timothy Tennent** — January 22, 2021

A special event that helps to capture something of the vibrancy in the nineteenth century is the first World Missionary Conference, which was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, on June 14–23, 1910.

The climate that led to the Edinburgh conference in 1910 can, perhaps, best be summed up by the publication of John Mott's *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*. John Mott (1865–1955) was a great mission mobilizer, having founded and chaired the Student Volunteer Movement from 1888 to 1920, as well as serving as the traveling secretary of the YMCA (1888–1915). Thousands of students came through these movements and joined the ranks of the mission societies to serve cross-culturally. Over the course of his work, Mott traveled nearly two million miles, gaining a great deal of firsthand knowledge about the work of missions around the world. Mott became convinced that with better coordination and strategic thinking, the entire world could be evangelized in one generation. This led to the publication of Mott's book in 1900, which sparked a wave of optimism about fulfilling the Great Commission in that generation. The book also highlighted the need for greater cooperation among the many mission agencies and more strategic thinking about the entire missionary enterprise. The conference in Edinburgh was designed to organize the final push for world evangelization. John R. Mott was named the chair of the event.



From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it would be easy to dismiss the conference as overly audacious in thinking they could plan for and organize the evangelization of the entire world. However, from the perspective of the early twentieth century, it was meticulously planned to be the most globally representative event in history. Rather than inviting delegates from churches, with their potential endless theological debates and ecclesiastical divisions, the invitations went out to every known mission society that was working with non-Christian peoples. The societies were invited to send delegates based on a strict proportionality to the size and scope of the work of the missions organization. Thus, although the ethnic origin of most of the delegates was of European descent, they came, quite literally, from all over the world, bringing extensive, firsthand experience of the mission field.

The conference was organized thematically, with each day of the conference centered on one of the following themes:

1. Carrying the Gospel to All the Non-Christian World
2. The Church in the Mission Field
3. Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life
4. Missionary Message in Relation to the Non-Christian World
5. The Preparation of Missionaries
6. The Home Base of Missions
7. Missions and Governments
8. Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity

Global Collaboration: The Birth of World Christianity

(See W. H. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 2010: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* [Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910], 48–49.)

These eight themes shed light on what were considered the most important issues and concerns of the day. Themes one, four, and six highlight how dramatically the world has changed in the last century. In 1910 it seemed entirely plausible to divide the world into the “Christian” and “non-Christian” spheres, with the West representing the “Christian” world, and the Majority World the “non-Christian” world. In 1910, the “home base” of missions was, undoubtedly, the Western world. Today, such assumptions are no longer tenable. Theme two (“The Church in the Mission Field”) reflects the hunger for accurate information about the state of the church in the Majority World. Themes three and five reveal the long-term value of education in Protestant missions. Themes four and seven highlight the importance of understanding the challenges and issues raised by followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, as well as the political contexts into which religion is embedded and that dramatically influence the missionary encounter. The last theme highlights the need for cooperation and collaboration as we collectively understand our shared roles in participating in God’s mission.

In conclusion, from the perspective of 2016, looking back on the legacy of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, there are several key features that capture the legacy of the conference. First, Edinburgh 1910 initiated an entirely new structure and constituency for reflecting on Christianity in the world. By focusing on delegates from the mission societies rather than the churches themselves, they were able to bring together people who were personally engaged in missionary work and who understood the challenges that faced the church at that time. By making it a “working” conference, rather than a motivational or inspirational event, the delegates were required to read and prepare a considerable amount of material before arriving at the conference. Therefore, those who came were prepared for a serious engagement of important issues.

Second, Edinburgh 1910 marked the real birth of mission studies as a serious thing the church gives thought to. Today, for example, we have very detailed books, such as the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, or the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, which gives very detailed information about the world and where Christians are located, and so forth.

Finally, over the course of the ten-day conference, there was a growing realization and recognition that Christianity was a truly worldwide movement. Never again could the Western church think honestly about the Christian movement in isolation from vibrant currents of indigenous Christianity around the world. Edinburgh 1910 was truly a turning point in the history of world Christianity. It is one of the great ironies of history that at a conference held in the heart of old Europe, the church, for the first time, captured a glimpse of a worldwide church.

As problems in the Western church seem to mount, it is encouraging to remember that we are part of a worldwide fellowship of Christians from around the world! It is not unusual for delegates from the countries of Africa to lovingly remind Western pastors of the gospel and the heritage we commonly share. This is one of the great strengths of being a part of a global movement.

Source: <https://www.seedbed.com/global-collaboration-the-birth-of-world-christianity/>

THE MAGNOLIA
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

FAMILY WORSHIP 9:00 A.M.
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:35 A.M.
GENESIS SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:35 A.M.
SANCTUARY WORSHIP 10:45 A.M.

Mailing Address:

Magnolia First United Methodist Church
320 West Main Street
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753

Phone: 870-234-4530 (Church)

Pastor: The Reverend Dr. Gary L. Maskell

Email: homiletics2002@gmail.com

Webpage: <http://www.magnoliafumc.org/home>

Lectionary Texts for this Week
April 18, 2021

3rd Sunday of Easter!

Lectionary Texts:

Acts 3:12-19,
Psalm 4 (UMH 741),
1 John 3:1-7,
Luke 24:36b-48

Liturgical Color: White or Gold

White symbolizes purity, holiness, and virtue, as well as respect and reverence. White is used for all high Holy Days and festival days of **the Church Year**, especially the seasons of **Christmas** and **Easter**, as well as for baptism, marriage, dedications, and in some traditions for the ordination of ministers. In some church traditions it is also used for funerals as a symbol of the resurrection.

Doubting in the Darkness

How does this happen?

- Well, it's really tough to fight off the *darkness of doubt* when we only encounter Jesus on Sunday mornings and even harder when those Sunday morning times of worship are far and few in between. *Isn't that what Thomas did on that resurrection evening?*
- It's very difficult to *remain in the light* when we rarely "turn on" God's *lamp unto our feet and [His] light unto our path*, i.e. open and study our Bibles *ala Psalm 119:105...*
- It's also quite difficult to walk in faith rather than doubt when our times of prayer and meditation occur with less frequency than a swiftly spoken mealtime prayer of "*Good food, Good meat, Good God, Let's Eat!*"

Perhaps shutting out the natural light of the world allows us to be exposed to the best kind of light, i.e., spiritual light!

So, Yes, there a solution to this age-old self-inflicted problem of *doubting in the darkness*! But it requires that we take God at His Word and do it!

Paul wrote in **Hebrews 10:25** "*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*" *My Translation...* Don't skip out on church for a brief excursion or a extra 30-minutes of snooze time! In these troubling days, we need these times of fellowship with God and each other! (NLT) Paul also wrote this in **Romans 10:17** "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*". John finishes this chapter by stating the purpose of his gospel account, "*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*"

I want to encourage you to no longer be "*Doubting in the Darkness,*" but take every chance to encounter the Risen Christ this year by being in church, studying His Word, praying, and allowing the Holy Spirit to strengthen you so that you too can go out with boldness as you proclaim that Christ is Risen!

You have been blessed to be a blessing, so be one!

Pastor Gary