

This I Believe— Darrell Yoder

11/18/18

I have a skeptical mind. I can relate to the Disciple Thomas who said he wouldn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus until he touched the wounds in Jesus' hands and in his side. I want to know the method behind the magic trick. I want to know what happens when a caterpillar goes into a chrysalis and comes out a butterfly.

At the same time:

I believe in the power of the Great Story that reaches back 2000 years to two sleepy little towns called Nazareth and Bethlehem in an out of the way place between great empires. The story that is primarily found in the Bible in the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

One place to begin is with a young woman named Mary who is engaged to be married to a much older man named Joseph. An angel comes to Mary and tells her that she is pregnant. That she is carrying in her body the son of God, and that the baby will be named Jesus. That out of all the women in the whole history of the world, she is the one who will carry God's Son to birth. That she is the most blessed woman in all of time.

Mary has to tell Joseph that she is pregnant with the Son of God. Of course he doesn't believe her and he plans to break off the engagement until he also gets a visit from an angel who tells him that Mary is telling the truth. Mary really is carrying the Son of God. The one who had been talked about for hundreds of years. The one who comes to save us. The Messiah.

Then larger political forces step in and dictate that Joseph must travel to Bethlehem, his ancestral home, to be counted in a census. Mary goes with him - riding on a donkey because walking is hard when you are nine months pregnant. When they finally arrive in Bethlehem; they are not welcome. They cannot find a place to stay because they are poor, because they are not important, and because they come from another place. Finally, someone takes pity on them and allows them to stay in a stable where Jesus is born and placed into a manger. Then the sky is filled with angels announcing the birth of the Christ Child to the lowest of the low – the shepherds in the fields. Then astronomer magicians show up from far off places and King Herod finds out something is up so the Holy Family has to flee as refugees to Egypt. And that is only the beginning of the story of the life of Jesus. My skeptical mind wants to relegate this tale to being a warm and fuzzy story for children that we bring out once a year in December with cookies, lights, and presents.

But I believe in the power of the Great Story, the story of God Incarnate being born among us as a defenseless baby to unmarried parents who were outsiders and refugees. When I hear of the caravans of people in Mexico walking toward hope, I hear the story of Christmas. When I hear of people being marginalized because of their identity, I hear the story of Christmas. When I hear calls for justice for the

oppressed, I hear the story of Christmas. When I hear someone say, “You are known and loved by God.”, I hear the story of Christmas.

This I believe.