



## The Ants & The Grasshopper Sermon

*This sermon was written by [Pastor Devon Bailey](#), from Austin, TX after watching *The Ants & The Grasshopper*. We offer it to you as one example of how to address the climate crisis from the pulpit, and you are welcome to use it in part or in its entirety.*

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In the Gospel of John, there's an honest account of a very relatable disciple. The women who had gone to Jesus's tomb returned making claims of a missing body. In a panic they assumed many things. *A stolen body. Conspiracy theories.* Eventually, what had been told to them before came crashing into their reality. Christ appears to them...alive. He shows them his wounds and they believe he has indeed defeated death.

But there was one disciple who was not present: Thomas. Though he would be told personal accounts of the event that had transpired, he would not readily believe. The idea was too preposterous, too impossible to be true. Despite witnesses, Thomas made it clear: "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Thomas needed to see the wounds himself before he could trust the testimony of others.

This account of Thomas is perhaps one of the more relatable accounts in all the Gospels. It's not hard to find ourselves in this story. Nor is it hard to imagine a person might need or even prefer some evidence to believe in something as unfathomable as resurrection. To simply trust the accounts of those who have experienced such a thing takes a great deal of faith and trust in the messenger. Even if those people are our dear friends. And yet we find Christianity persists. The claims of the resurrected Jesus are believed by billions throughout history, despite most of these believers having never seen the physical wounds of a resurrected body.

I recently saw headlines of what was being called a "monster monsoon season" in the South Asian country of Pakistan. Weeks of flooding have killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands of people.

Our relationship to these headlines is always so interesting. It's devastating, sad, and yet one of many sad stories and tragedies I am likely to scroll by this week. Will I be moved in any way to respond to this? Will it tug at my heart in such a way that I get involved? Or is it too far off? I have no real connections to these people beyond my grief and concern for their suffering. I have empathy sure, but perhaps not enough empathy to respond with action. Is this devastation perhaps too far away for us to feel the gravity of such a crisis that has harmed so, so many people?

I recently returned from a service trip with the high school youth group I lead where we helped build homes in eastern Kentucky. We spent the week doing our best to help homes there be warmer, safer, and drier. About three weeks after our departure, that region was hit with record rainfall and devastating flooding. The families we had just worked with sent us photos of the devastation in their community. They sent photos of family and community members who, even though their homes were on four foot stilts, had water levels to their ceilings. Their homes and their community were absolutely destroyed. These were friends; people we'd dined with, homes we'd been welcomed into, communities we knew texting us with stories of the mud in their homes. Of their furniture ruined. Of the water lines above their tv sets. Of the folks that didn't survive the flooding.

We raised money for the community. We called regularly to check on them. We shared our despair as we heard more rain would come. We planned ways to send our community there to help in the aftermath.

The power of the testimony was becoming stronger because the wounds were moving closer.

Now, after a summer of drought, water from rainfall here in Texas rose so high in such a short period that it began to rise through my floor boards. The local news was outside my home filming the water levels. Now it was my neighbors calling to check on **me**. Calling to offer me a place to stay. Letting me know they were ready to help out in the case of an emergency. For days I left a towel at my door hoping it would be some small line of defense. These stories I had heard from across the world, from across the country, from my friends had finally appeared in my very home, revealing that what felt distant, I too am completely vulnerable towards.

We are living in a peculiar time where our faith and trust is being begged for by experts and by those sharing testimony of their own wounds caused by climate change. Experts have pleaded that our own fate is tied directly to our ability to believe their warnings. Many climate refugees have come from the graves of their harvests, their livestock, their rivers, their homes to ask for our faith in their testimonies, warning us to act and confront our pollution before we too discover devastation.

Many who do believe are perhaps overwhelmed by the grandness of the Pharoah to whom we are pleading our cause of enslavement. It appears that after years of increasing devastation and testimony, that meaningful change is unlikely to come until many of us, like Thomas, see those wounds ourselves.

Weekly we pray for God's will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, yet exist in the hellish overwhelm caused by our own consumption.

Some of our Christian indifference seems rooted in the expectation that we will leave this Earth and God will take us elsewhere. Or that this destruction is rooted in God's will and according to God's plan for each of us. These beliefs can lead one to ask "So why get involved?" Neither of

these ideas seem to align with what we find in Scripture. Even Revelation speaks of a movement of God *towards* us rather than all of the faithful being “raptured” elsewhere. We are invited instead to prepare this place for our Master’s return. Be alert. Stay awake! God is reconciling all things back to himself and we are each called and invited to take part in this work. To both embody it and make it known. The whole of creation is included. Even the rocks cry out.

How odd it is that so many would believe that a God that entered into our story, our lives, would somehow have us favor indifference rather than salvation and healing and restoration. Our escapist theologies have harmed us to the point of letting death and ruin rule for the sake of promised riches elsewhere. We’ve come to believe that our destruction and ruin do not matter to a loving creator that has invited us to be a part of this ongoing creation. We cannot call such movements selfless. We cannot call them righteous. We cannot forget the prayer that we pray without ceasing that calls God’s will to be done *on Earth as it is in Heaven*.

For it is not heaven that burns.

In the very first scenes of the Bible, we find humanity in an abundant flourishing garden. There is an invitation for them to take part in the ongoing creation by looking after and cultivating the Garden. Humanity is placed in the Garden it says, “to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15) Though many scholars have long pointed out that the words translated “to work” could be translated another way; “worship.” It’s the same word. One of the ways we worship God, spoken from the very first stories, is to cultivate and look after Creation. It is perhaps the original work humanity is brought into. We are a created thing that has also been empowered to create more. Though perhaps we have done more creating than cultivating as of late. More consumption than stewardship. More indifference than worship.

There must be urgency in our transformation.

The Gospel is a witness to a powerful transformation that we all are invited to not just find hope in but find mission in. It is indeed possible to change our lives based on the testimony of many. If it were not, there would be no Christian tradition. It is the very embodiment and sharing of the Gospel and our own testimony that transforms the hearts and minds of people. We will be known by our love and all that we cultivate. It is the very insistence that confronts Pharaohs and Emperors. There is urgency in this work.

Yet despite a great many witnesses, despite the testimony of so many, Thomas had to see the wounds to be changed.

What will it take for us?

Jesus responded to Thomas: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

May our faith move mountains. May our collective testimony confront the harm of Empires. May our worship cultivate Creation. And may our belief respond swiftly, before we see the wounds.

Amen.