

The Unbelievable Truth April 2022 Easter 2

I wonder how many of you listen to Radio 4: maybe the Today programme, Woman's Hour, The Moral Maze, or The Archers. Or perhaps, on the lighter end of the spectrum a programme called The Unbelievable Truth. We sometimes catch it in the car on the way home

from church on a Sunday morning. How many of you have ever heard it? Hands up.

OK. So, a bit of explanation is obviously required.

The unbelievable truth is a comedy panel game with four contestants and is chaired by [David Mitchell](#). It's described in the programme's introduction as 'the panel game built on truth and lies.'

The object of the game is for each panellist to deliver a short lecture about a given subject, which should be completely false, save for five true statements, which they must attempt to smuggle past the other players.

That certainly sounds straightforward enough but so many crazy assertions are made it's almost impossible to know which are true and which are lies. Certainly for simple folk like me.

So, here's an example. In 2002, a police speed camera in Germany caught a duck breaking the speed limit by travelling at 39 kilometres ph in a 30 zone.

Seems a bit mad doesn't it? But that fact was indeed true. It turned out that the duck was flying a few centimetres above street level in a town called Gluckstadt, when it triggered off the speed camera.

'Jesus is alive and we have seen him'. That too sounded like another unbelievable truth.

Or so it must have seemed to the man Thomas. Of course he didn't hear this 'fact' on the radio, but from his friends. Could he believe what his friends were saying to him? This wasn't a game though: this was your mates getting you up to date with the news, with facts, with reality, with the truth.

Whilst the disciples had been holed up in Jerusalem, scared for their lives, following Jesus' crucifixion, Thomas the disciple had been AWOL. Why? I don't know. We could have all sorts of speculation over that but actually we just don't know.

But now he was back. Back perhaps needing to share with his friends the pain and grief he was going through. Back, needing some friendship, back needing a good hug, a cup of tea and a listening ear.

This was not what he was expecting. This was madness. But was he going to be taken in by this ridiculous thing they were trying to tell him?

Was this news that they had just told him a step too far? If it was correct it would be so fantastic, truly amazing, earth shattering and wonderful. But surely too much to be really believable.

Wishful thinking on the part of his friends perhaps. Had they seen a vision? Had they mistaken someone else for Jesus? After all they were all suffering from a heavy dose of grief and of fear? Unbelievable or an unbelievable truth?

And so, as we now know of course, Thomas laid down a challenge. He would only believe this strange news if he had hard proof.

Of course he must have wanted to believe it but to see someone who had just died on a cross, alive and well wasn't a usual part of one's experience.

Of course he wanted proof and proof on his terms. Proof that demanded more than just a crazy rumour. Proof not just with his own eyes but with his hands too.

Indisputable proof. And who could really blame him?

It must have been a long seven days for Thomas before he got his wish. I wonder of by then he had almost forgotten his challenge.

After all, he wasn't the first of Jesus' friends to dispute that unbelievable truth. Mary Magdalene, went to the tomb early in the morning. She found the body had gone and

was convinced he was been stolen. Even when she later actually saw Jesus, her first thought was that he was the gardener. A truth much easier to take on board.

And the rest of the disciples? What sort of example were they setting? Fearful and in hiding on that first day of the week, unsurprisingly I suppose. They certainly weren't behaving like people who knew that Jesus was alive.

We live in an age that demands proofs.

I have a friend who calls herself an unbeliever. She says she can't see or touch God. She says that his existence cannot be proved so how can he exist. QED.

And, if I am honest, there are times when I almost see where she is coming from. However I know not to argue with her. She is happy with her conclusion and doesn't want it shaken.

I know that there is no point in telling her that's there's quite a lot in life that you can't see or touch but you know exists. Nor of talking to her about faith and hope and love.

But today on this very special day for the Perryman family, we *can* share a story of faith and hope and love. We can share the story of the unbelievable truth.

Today Clare and Mark have come to church to acknowledge their own truth. They each have their own story of faith. They each know the presence of the risen Jesus Christ in their lives.

They are counted with those who Jesus said are blessed even though they haven't seen him. Remember those encouraging words that Jesus said after he had helped Thomas out of his difficult spot.

And that is a faith that Mark and Clare are sharing publically with young Isaac who will soon be baptised.

Isaac means laughter. Did you know that? What a wonderful name. I hope he puts it to good use. And to be baptised by his own Grandma-how amazing that is.

Shortly Mark and Clare and Isaac's godparents will make promises on his behalf, in the hope that his faith will grow. They hope and pray that one day he will stand before a bishop somewhere and declare his own faith in the unbelievable truth that Jesus lives. Jesus lives-no one could destroy him.

Of course, it won't always be easy. It wasn't for those early Christians, it isn't always easy for us. And it won't be for Isaac.

As then, we still live in a world of lies and deceit, in a world of hatred and evil. We live in a world where it isn't cool to be a person of faith. We live in a world where science holds sway, where the secular matters.

But we also recall that on that dark first day of the week in that locked upper room Jesus breathed his spirit upon his friends: the spirit that forever gives life and hope to God's people. And we will shortly pray that Isaac will be renewed daily by that same spirit as we welcome him into the church and as he walks with the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

What an unbelievable truth. Amen