

Sermon.

I could tell you a story, but you wouldn't believe it.

At 100 years old, you can hardly blame her for keeping to herself. After all, she's avoided humans for her entire extinction.

Two months ago, a Fernandina Giant Tortoise was spotted for the first time since 1906 when they were thought to have gone extinct¹—a 100-year-old female once again proclaiming resurrection.

It happens from time to time, when a species thought to have been extinct rises from the dead to surprise conservationists.

Of course, such news has to be verified. Scientists don't just take someone's word for it. In fact, hardly any of us take someone's word for it when it comes to something truly unbelievable. When something someone says sounds too preposterous, too unbelievable, too good to be true, the notion of "trust but verify" seems antiquated; more like "Verify, then maybe we can talk about trust."

There's a name for this phenomenon on social media and the internet: *Pics or it didn't happen*. If there aren't videos or pictures to prove it, then I don't believe you.

¹<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/02/extinct-fernandina-giant-tortoise-found/>

Like the squirrel in a tree eating a slice of pizza. I needed to see the picture of the squirrel up in the tree, both paws tightly clenching a slice of pepperoni pizza.

Just like I needed to see the picture of the rainbow that had come out over top of the street sign that read Rainbow Blvd.

Like the car that was somehow parked on a 6th floor balcony.

Or the man driving his Fiat on the interstate practicing his recorder.

Or the college student in a class lecture whose laptop was opened to an article headlined, "Top 10 jobs for college dropouts."

Or the AAA guy who came to let someone into their car, only to lock his own keys in his AAA truck, only to have someone from AAA let him in.

Or maybe most of all, the man who claimed he pinned Chuck Norris to the ground.

I could tell you a story, but you wouldn't believe it.

Pics or it didn't happen.

It's the contemporary spin on your grandpa's favorite fish tales. It was *thisssss big!*

In many ways, that seems to be the response of the disciples, when the women

Pics or It Didn't Happen

Luke 24:1-12; Isa 65:17-25

Brent Newberry

April 21, 2019

Easter Sunday

who never abandoned Jesus tell the 11 men who fled, that Jesus' tomb was empty, that he wasn't there, that he was alive.

Thankfully that's one ancient custom that died out a long time ago—men not believing women...

Actually, it seems that Peter and the other disciples did something that a few people recently coined as "hepeating." Do you know that word? Hepeating? Hepeating is when a woman shares an idea, maybe in a board room or at the office, and it's ignored, but then a man shares the idea and everyone loves it.²

Here, the women's story is disregarded and labeled an idle tale, until Peter and his pals verify and then start spouting the good news all over the place.

In the grand scheme of things, I don't know if the women cared all that much once people started hearing the news because the news was really *thiiiiissss* big. But just remember when you share the story of Easter, it was those faithful women who told it first.

They bore witness to the resurrection before pictures were ever a thing. And

²https://twitter.com/NoisyAstronomer/status/911213826527436800?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ct_wcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E911213826527436800&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmashable.com%2F2017%2F09%2F25%2Fhepeating-term-women-workplace%2F

even still, they weren't really believed, but they kept speaking their truth anyway until somebody listened, Peter or not, until people started believing. They showed us what it means to be a true disciple, to bear witness.

We know the phrase from the legal system. Bearing witness. Witnesses testify to what they saw or know: the car ran a red light, I was pressured to lie, I saw the person run from the scene of the crime, the tomb was empty and two angels in dazzling white told us Jesus was alive. Bearing witness means "to show something exists or is true."

And precisely because the resurrection isn't something that can be proven; the GoPros on those Roman helmets haven't been found yet, we are left with the stories of those who were there. The female disciples bore witness; they showed it to be true, that Jesus' aliveness existed. And they were compelling enough that people eventually listened, whether to them or to the male disciples. And the stories of others who bore witness to the Risen Christ only grew in number, as they witnessed him in person, until a new movement was born, one that almost every one of the disciples would eventually die for.

Tell me, how many idle tales to people die for anyway?

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In today's overly exposed and recorded world, what better way to show something exists than to commit your way of life to it?

Look, I can't prove the resurrection to you any more than I can convince you I saw a dodo bird last week.

I could tell you a story, but you wouldn't believe it. How the resurrection has changed my life.

That as a person who has lived with depression, I find hope and meaning and life knowing that this isn't the way things should be, and this isn't the way things always will be.

Because the resurrection means that the God who breathed life into nothing at creation,
who breathed life into humanity with the incarnation,
breathed life into death with the resurrection,
and will breathe life into my depression,
and your anxiety,
and your diagnosis,
and your grief,
and your loss,
and your pain,
and your fears,
because our God makes all things new.

Death has been defeated,

Alleluia!

Christ is risen!

And we are the pictures to prove it.

With our lives, we bear witness to its power.

With our dreams and hopes and compassion and justice, we bear witness to the power of God's love.

That's the story we tell with our lives. That Christ is risen indeed.

Can you believe it?