

Easter 2—Year B
Acts 4:32-35
Psalm 133
I John 1:1-2:2
John 20:19-31

Last Sunday began a process that will take us **50 days to move through**. It will **take us 50 days, at least, to understand and integrate this truth: resurrected life is not restarting the old life and picking up right where we left off, it's a whole different quality of life**—and *today*, helps us to see **just how different** this **new life** is going to be.

Acts helps us see that the *entire worldview* of believers is *entirely different*. They had a newfound capacity to **be of one heart and one mind**. *Gone* was their sense of **private ownership of any possessions**, but they **held everything that they owned in common**. *Gone* was any notion of the **have's and the have not's**, those who had **plenty and to spare and those who were in need**. They **sold everything**, they **pooled everything**, they **laid it all at the feet of the apostles, at the feet of the community**, and **then it was distributed to each as any had need**. **No need to prove oneself worthy of help; need was the only requirement**.

Can you imagine???

The **resurrection changed everything** about how **followers of Jesus understood economics and what is mine**. It was a **whole new relationship with money and one another**. Truly, **no one was left behind**—there was **no place for one person thriving while another struggled with need**.

How does resurrection change our view of possessions and money and need and the distribution of resources? What would it look **let our hearts and minds become one with others** such that we **didn't want to cling to "what is ours," but instead were eager to release it** because when **any member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers?**

Resurrection is a whole different quality of life that rewrites our toughest narratives. We spent a good amount of time in **Holy Week examining every crook and cranny of humanity's capacity to go off the rails and participate in all manner of injustice and brokenness and just plain sin**. We've spent a good amount of time **this past year marking our losses—personal and collective—and examining our complicity in that which is broken**. Just like those **disciples on that first Easter evening, we've locked our doors—literally and figuratively**. **So many things can lock us in—fear, anger, resentment, jealousy, envy, anxiety, grief, loss, powerlessness, fundamental human need, intractable systems that do not honor or respect the dignity of every human being, weariness, isolation**.

And yet, **when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord**.

The disciples' awareness was a dawning one. *Rarely* does fear disappear on a dime. It took Jesus wishing them *peace*; it took them seeing his hands and his side; it took seeing his *wounds*. *Then*, they could see their Lord; *then* they could rejoice.

Jesus comes through all of their locked doors, and all of ours. No matter what barriers our heart has thrown up to guard its tenderness, Jesus comes crashing through with his *peace* revealing that we don't need to fear the *wounds*, *his* or *ours*, from the things that have crucified us—in *fact*, they can be the very place where resurrection life will shine out the brightest.

But, again, this *resurrection life isn't about picking up the old life where we left off—it's a whole new life, a whole new perspective.* And so, *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."* *When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."* Just as God filled us at creation with divine breath, *so now* Jesus breathes on us again filling us with the power of his Spirit, and this power isn't a diffuse one, but is *piercing* in its specificity; it is the *power to forgive the sins of any* and to release them from the anguish of broken relationship AND it's the *power to retain the sins of any* and hold them in bondage.

It's a terrifying power to possess—by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can set one another free OR we can keep that door locked between us blocking the flow of love. *From the beginning, God has honored our capacity to choose—"I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses, choose life that you and your descendants may life"* [Deuteronomy 30:19]. Ask anyone struggling to forgive OR yearning to be forgiven, and they will be able to describe all too well what feels *lifegiving* AND what feels *death dealing*. *From the beginning, God has honored our capacity to choose, and now, Jesus empowers our choice again.*

And then comes Thomas. *Let's ease up on Thomas.* How many times have we needed a little more evidence that resurrection is *real*? When fear has locked us up, when brokenness has laid us low, when grief won't let us up for air, it's easy to disregard the witness of those who have seen the Risen Lord.

No, I appreciate Thomas' tenacity that he wants to see the risen life pouring out of those wounds with his own eyes; he wants to touch those wounds with his own hand, to know for himself that those wounds don't have the last word; *Thomas will not settle for others' witness; he wants to experience all of this firsthand.*

What was true for Thomas is true of all of us. Trust me, if there was a way for me as a priest to give to others my deep and abiding sense that the resurrection is *real* and *true* and *tangible*, I'd have hacked that capacity a long time ago. *But all of us, all of us*, have to see and touch these places for ourselves for them to take root in our lives.

So, one week later, the disciples are back together, and this time, Thomas is among them. Although the doors were shut—getting better here, we've moved from locked doors TO shut doors, slowly we're opening up our tender hearts—although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger

here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe. Do not doubt Thomas, but trust, trust me, trust resurrection, trust this new life pouring out of all these wounded places.” And that was what Thomas needed. Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Can you imagine? Can we dare to believe that all the wounded places that we see in this world, that we know in our own lives, can we dare to see that the Risen Lord lives THERE, that resurrection life can pour from THOSE places where brokenness has flowed for so long? What would change in you, what would change in your world view, if you believed this was possible, if you trusted this were true? What hope might take root and grow in a whole new direction? What courage might be born? It is said that Thomas went on to India to tell of the Risen Lord—that’s a pretty long way from a locked room in Jerusalem. What in you might be set free if you understood your wounds as places of revelation where new, powerful, and fearlessly resilient life shines the brightest?

Jesus does have one more thing to say to Thomas, and heard in one way, it stings a bit, but heard in another way, it’s just Jesus revealing a deeper truth. Jesus said to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Jesus absolutely meets Thomas right where Thomas needs to be met in order that Thomas may come to belief, but resurrection will present itself in a thousand different ways, some of which will not be seen, but will be felt at the level of sensation, or heard, or simply intuited, and this will be how we will come to trust that resurrection is real and true, and WE will be no less blessed than Thomas or those first disciples on that first Easter evening. Resurrection is resurrection is resurrection no matter how we come to believe it and trust it.

To understand and care about our common humanity, to experience and live in the peace that can get through all our locked doors, to embrace the life that isn’t afraid of wounds but sees them as places of revelation, that knows that within those wounds lives the Crucified and Risen Lord—THIS is a whole different quality of life. It’s yours if only you will look and see and touch and let the locked door become a shut door and then become an open door through which you are free travel in the power of the Spirit. Call it resurrection, call it something else if you need to, but once you know these things, your life will never be same again. Amen.

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