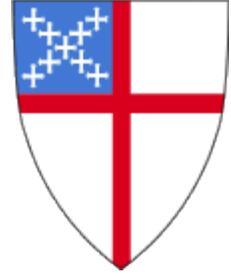


Second Sunday of Easter

Year C
RCL



- [Acts 5:27-32](#)
- [Revelation 1:4-8](#)
- [John 20:19-31](#)
- [Psalm 118:14-29](#)
- *or* [Psalm 150](#)

14 The LORD is my strength and my song, *
and he has become my salvation.

Faith: Believing without seeing is more virtuous than believing because you have seen. This speaks to those of us, two thousand years later, who believe without seeing.

Thomas wasn't the only disciple that doubted, that demanded he see Jesus for himself. Every one of the disciples had trouble believing in the resurrection until Jesus appeared to them. Remember when Mary Madeline announced the resurrection to the other disciples? They too doubted. It was only after Jesus appeared to them, while they were locked in the upper room, that they could really believe. There He was, alive. He used the familiar greeting, "Peace be unto you," so they would know it was Him.

There must have been joy, and expressions of incredulity, bodily resurrection hadn't even entered their minds. Then Jesus told them that as He had been sent by the Father, they were being sent by the Son. He knew they were ready, but surely, they had that moment of breath taking ... I don't know... exhilaration? Fear? Self-doubt?

Remember that first day on the job? You were finished with school, or the training, or even orientation, and then suddenly it was all you. No more teachers, no more instruction, just you and the job. And that's where the disciples found themselves at this moment. The time had come for them to be sent out to their missions. To go out into the hostile world to proclaim the good news. God loves you, no exceptions.

When Thomas echoes their disbelief, and says what they might have thought of saying, "I need to touch his wounds, I need to see proof." They must have grumbled a bit about his lack of faith. Then, when they are locked in the room a week later, still fearful and trying to avoid detection, and arrest, Jesus comes again. And He addresses Thomas's doubts. We don't know if Thomas actually fulfilled his demand to touch the wounds, but we know he exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God." No longer doubting, but deeply believing. And Jesus responds by

blessing those who can believe without seeing. Those who can accept his divinity without the benefit of physical presence.

The transformation of the disciples is incredible. They are no longer timid.

Contrast the tremendous audacity they display when arrested by the temple police and questioned by the council. They were preaching the good news of Christ's resurrection, despite orders not to preach anything to do with Jesus. They weren't even supposed to use his name. But they were following orders from the highest authority. No longer cowering in the locked room, fearful for their lives.

We know that the church gains strength in adversity. Christians learn to depend upon one another, and when they continue to love everyone, they win. Paul preached love of his captors in Rome. Despite the often-cruel treatment, he told his followers to love. Not to plot revenge, but to show love. When asked to heal family members of his Roman captors, Paul was happy to show the power of the Holy Spirit and give them love.

Our society doesn't exactly follow that directive. We have TV and movies to show us the value of justified violence. If someone hurts, kills, kidnaps your family member you exact a toll of horrific, explosive revenge. I suppose it doesn't make good entertainment to return hate with love, cruelty with mercy, and darkness

with light. I have been asked about the Episcopal Church's motto "God Loves You, no exceptions." Even terrorists? Even Muslims? Even people entering the US illegally? Even ... You add a description. And Presiding Bishop Michael Curry would say, "Yes."

Bishop Curry calls us the Jesus Movement, and he has directed the Episcopal Church to publish the practice he calls "the Way of Love, Practices for a Jesus Centered Life."

Turn Pause, listen, and choose to follow Jesus

Learn Reflect on Scripture each day, especially Jesus' life and teachings

Pray Dwell intentionally with God each day

Worship Gather in community weekly to thank, praise, and draw near God

Bless Share faith and unselfishly give and serve

Go Cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus

Rest Receive the gift of God's grace, peace, and restoration

In my other profession that of a hand therapist, I hold the hands of many people that fit that category of the "other". After years and years of holding the hands of people with all skin colors, beliefs, national origin, I find that all of us are very

much the same. We all hurt, and love, and enjoy a good joke. We trade recipes, and stories about our children. It is far more difficult to hate someone that you know.

I have been listening to the news stories about the suicide bombings in Shri Lanka. The bombers chose churches in neighborhoods where everyone got along. Where neighbors were Christian, and Muslim, and Buddhist. Where everyone shared a common identity within their neighborhood. The attackers are sewing hatred. They encourage a lack of trust between neighbors. It is how the terrorists win. They take away the love between neighbors and replace it with fear.

When we reach out to those we recognize as friends, even when they are different, even when it would be easy to replace our affection with fear, we win and the terrorists lose.

I encourage you to seek out those who are different than you. Refuse to accept hatred of anyone different than you as the enemy. Read, study, and think deeply about scripture. Follow Jesus. Live as Jesus would have us live. Join the disciples as they learn to face their fears, and reject them.

We may not be able to touch Jesus, or to put our fingers in his wounds, we can see his face in our world as Love rebuilds trust. We can feel his presence as we

reach out to those in need around us, and offer what we can to give comfort.

Jesus loves every one of us. No exceptions.