

The Second Sunday of Easter

April 7, 2013

Acts 5:27-32

Psalm 118:19-24 or Psalm 150

Revelation 1:4-8

John 20:19-31

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

How would you feel if came into a room full of your friends, finding them all laughing and excited about something and realizing you were the only one who missed whatever it was? Worse still, what if the subject of their excitement was the sudden reappearance of your best friend, your teacher, whom you knew to be dead and buried? What if you were the only one who missed it? We must remember that this happened on the evening of Easter Day, the day of Resurrection; it was all fresh in Thomas' mind.

So here is Thomas who has gone off somewhere. First, when he returns, he's confused, then disappointed, then angry, angry with himself. He blurts out, because he's angry, "Well, I don't believe it; I want proof! I want to touch the wounds of His hands and His side." And so he goes down in history as "doubting Thomas."

Actually Thomas has been perhaps the most faithful and courageous of them all. When Jesus sets Himself on the path to Jerusalem and certain death, it's Thomas who says they must go with Him and die with him – hardly the words of one who doubts. If anything, Thomas may be the realist among the disciples, a realist with a touch of the pessimist. Jesus knows Thomas very well.

One week passes; the disciples apparently remain together, perhaps in fear, perhaps in grief, and Jesus appears again. Jesus offers Thomas the very confirmation he needs.

The recognition and acknowledgement is enough. It doesn't say that Thomas ever actually touched those wounds. The proof lay in the presence of Jesus; the proof for Thomas lay in the offer, and Thomas says, "My Lord and my God!"

How significant is the reply of Jesus to Thomas: "You believe because you have seen me; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

That would be the crowds that formed around Peter and John as they spoke of Jesus in the temple, crowds who knew of Jesus only through their words. That would include the seven churches in Asia in the Revelation to John, churches in a remote province filled with people who had somehow heard of Jesus and believed what they heard. Perhaps they first heard of him from pilgrims who had been in Jerusalem and present at the event that we call Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And, of course, that would include us, you and me.

In at least one way, we are all a bit like Thomas; we all need recognition and acknowledgement. We all need to know that He knows who and where we are and cares for us.

A short story: Many years ago, when I was just finishing the preparation to be ordained, I had to meet with the Diocesan Commission on Ministry, at Honey Creek on the coast just south of Brunswick. I met with them and was approved and, mid-afternoon I started home; we lived in Augusta at the time. As I started home, it began to rain.

The drive went up to Savannah on I-95, then west on I-16, then on a two-lane road through Statesboro. It began to be dark; the rain turned to sleet and ice; and I seemed to be the only car on the road. Little by little, the road became iced over. I was totally absorbed in driving; I may have prayed, I may have cursed, perhaps out loud. Then this voice said, “Do you seriously think I have brought you this far to abandon you on a road in Georgia?” I suppose that voice was in my head, but it seemed very real; I felt safe and protected and somehow at peace.

Perhaps that is what Thomas felt when he said, “My Lord and my God.”

In His Holy Name.