

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, April 7th, 2024, Easter II
Acts 4:32-35, Psalm 133, 1 John 1:1-2:2, John 20:19-31

The disciples are gathered behind locked doors. Jesus appears and says peace be with you receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive, they are forgiven if not their sins are retained.

The power we have in our own lives. The gift of peace and the Holy Spirit given to all of us. The same spirit, but different gifts. But it is a matter of accepting and/or receiving the gift. I know it's just after Easter, but a Christian metaphor comes to mind. What do you do with the Christmas gift? Yes, you might re gift it to someone else, but don't you still open it? How many gifts have you just put on a shelf without opening?

The gift of peace and the Holy Spirit received and opened.

The irony it seems when we need it most and can use it most that is when we are the most likely not to receive and open. When things are stacked against us when we feel we are unworthy and have nothing to offer.

This is humility is needed but not such humbleness that we are paralyzed. The disciples fit into this as well. With what their facing and the death of Jesus.

So, can we really blame Thomas for doubting what the other disciples told him? There is the value of doubt and for us to keep questioning. And the sense of seeing things for ourselves. This is not just seeing with our eyes, but experiencing the presence of the Lord, the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The difficulty of trying to explain it to others. Time space language to describe something beyond time and space. And two people having the same experience will use different words and a different understanding. That is why it is interesting in bible study to read different translations of the passage, but it can give new and interesting insights.

And one incomplete way of understanding our relationship with God, and others. It is like a telephone call. We only hear the part of the person talking to God, and only hear later what they tell you they heard from God.

In other words, Thomas wanted to have his own conversation with Jesus. And he is not a bad model for us. As he did not disbelieve them and walk away, but asked the question and made the request. And even though this comes up as part of the Easter story every year, it is not just a one-time situation. This is ongoing. Our relationship with God in Christ is continuous and we face questions almost daily.

It is like the conversation I had a long time ago. The person said that they could never get angry at God. My response was God is no good to me if I cannot get mad at him. If God cannot handle my anger, how Good is God to me or any of us.

The point is not just be angry with God and leave it but bring our anger to God and wait for an answer. The point is that being angry and staying angry are two different things.

Is this any different from bring our questions and doubts to God?
And in so doing being open to receiving the gifts of peace and the Holy Spirit?

And if we don't, this can affect others and not just ourselves. The concept of forgiveness. We have been given the power to forgive or not, because that is an energy that affects both parties. The negative energy from lack of forgiveness affects both involved. And in a very real way to receive the gifts of peace and the Holy Spirit is also to receive from God the gift of forgiveness. And by extension receiving the gift of forgiveness involves being willing to forgive others and ourselves as well,

Amen

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet
walk with you on the road.

May the Christ who serves with wounded hands
stretch out your hands to serve.

May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart
open your hearts to love.

May you see the face of Christ in ev'ryone you meet,
And may ev'ryone you meet see the face of Christ in you. Amen.