

Rev Sally's Sermon

April 11, 2021

Sometimes I envy the first disciples. They heard. They saw. They maybe even touched the risen Jesus. If I could just see Jesus, I think, then all my doubts would vanish, then my faith would be unstoppable.

It was the evening of the first day of the week. Jesus' disciples had gathered to support each other. But they were cautious – some fearful. Their leader had been crucified, so the doors were bolted. But then without warning, another was there. Jesus stood among them. Joy and amazement must have filled their hearts. How can this be? Yet there he was among them, in the flesh, showing them the very wounds that had killed him. But Thomas was not there that evening, and when he heard the story, he refused to believe. “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” Then a week later, Jesus provided what Thomas asked for. Jesus appeared again among his disciples, but this time Thomas was present. “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”

Belief in Jesus. This is why John wrote this Gospel. “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

What does it mean to believe? The Greek word is “Pistos”. I did a word study on Google, the new concordance. The word means trusting, loyal, true, one who trusts in God's promises. In last Sunday's gospel, the beloved disciple believed when he saw the burial linens lying to the side. Mary believed, when in the midst of her grief and despair, Jesus spoke her name. The disciples believed when they saw Jesus with their eyes and heard his voice for themselves. And finally, Thomas believed when Jesus provided what Thomas asked for, when Jesus came to him and revealed the wounds in his hands and side. “Do not be unbelieving,” Jesus said, “but believe.”

Why is it important to believe? Because this is how we can receive Jesus's life, the life of God. That's what Jesus's resurrection life is, the life of God. Jesus is one with God and when we trust in him, we are able to share in his life, we are able to share the life of God. And this is the life that is stronger than death. Jesus wants to share his life with all his disciples, the first disciples and us. And he will do whatever it takes.

Just as Jesus provided what the first disciples needed to have faith; he will provide for us too. He will provide what we need to place our trust in him. He will come to us in many different

ways. Perhaps we will meet him when he answers our prayers. Perhaps we'll meet him when the words of scripture touch our heart. Perhaps we'll meet him when God works a miracle in our lives.

In our weekly Bible study last week, we talked about miracles. In the verses we read, Jesus healed a woman who had suffered for many years and he returned a little girl, who had died, to life. During our gathering, we discussed what miracles were. Someone said miracles happen when God shows up in life. They may be as grand as a dead girl returned to life, but they may also be as subtle as my answered prayers last Sunday when we had glorious weather for our Easter celebration.

Jesus knows what we need for faith and he will provide. But sometimes we do need to open the eyes of our faith. Then if we look around us, we will see the risen Lord among us. I see the risen Lord in Holy Scripture when I need a word of encouragement and there it is. I see the risen Lord in my kitty Daisy. I don't think I realized just how lonely I had gotten until she came and filled my life, providing comfort and companionship. As I said, sometimes you have to look and expect to see the Lord. Many years ago, when I was just beginning to practice as an accountant, I was invited to go to a retreat weekend in February. But if you know anything about accounting, you know that February is the beginning of tax season. I had to work that weekend. But on Monday of that week, my supervisor was reviewing the work that had come in so far. "We don't need to work this weekend," he said. So, I went on the retreat and my life was never the same. I began a journey of faith in Jesus. As I look back on the events of that February, I see Jesus providing what I needed for faith.

The desire of our risen Lord is to share the life of God with us. This is why it's important to have faith – to trust in Jesus. This is how we receive his gift. And Jesus will do whatever it takes to open the hearts of his people.