



'Resurrection Impact: Blind Faith'

Second Sunday of Easter
5:30 pm, Saturday, April 2, 2016
The Reverend Nancy R. Easton
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

[Acts 5:27-32](#); [John 20:19-31](#)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

On my mother's street live neighbors who are grandparents. They often care for their highly verbal and somewhat precocious granddaughter. When she was in a kindergarten, they'd pick her up and bring her to their house until Mom and Dad finished work. The grandparents happen to be devout Christians. Their talking about Jesus, and talking about their faith is as natural to them as breathing.

They also believe in something else—good hygiene. So they were absolutely fastidious about keeping the little girl healthy, insisting she wash her hands liberally and frequently. Well, my mom shared with me the story that neighbor told her—that one day their granddaughter became a little frustrated with her grandparents. She was about to do something really fun, when they told her to first go wash her hands. The little girl replied, "All I hear around this house is 'Jesus' and 'germs' and I've never seen either one of them!"

There. That's Thomas. The disciple who replies with bluntness and honesty, and perhaps a bit of frustration as well: "All I hear around here is the 'risen Jesus this' and the 'risen Jesus that', and I still haven't seen him!" His fellow disciples tell Thomas they've seen Jesus, that Jesus is alive. In fact, John uses a particular verb tense here in his gospel, referring to how their action is continuous. In other words, the disciples **keep on** telling Thomas the story that they saw Jesus. (And no wonder—if we met someone raised from the dead, we'd certainly be talking a blue streak about it!) So just how many times must Thomas be forced to wrestle with the incongruity, the impossibility of it all? That a dead man lives? Should he swallow their story hook, line, and sinker?

You have to admit Thomas has a point here. After all, not much has changed in one week since the Resurrection. Rome remains in power, ready to clamp down on its people if they do anything that smacks of revolt. The disciples remain behind closed doors—maybe they feel too vulnerable to venture out beyond them. In many ways, their situation is no less precarious and no more certain than it was the day Jesus died. Thomas has to wonder if the story about Jesus' risen appearance is more wishful thinking than physical reality.

Sometimes we are like Thomas. We know the story of Jesus crucified, died, and raised to new life to bring us to new life. Perhaps we have heard the story countless times. But there are those days when we figure, if Jesus really is raised from the dead, really is present with us now, breathing his life-giving Spirit into us, bestowing his endless peace

upon us, then wouldn't things be different in the world? Or at the very least, wouldn't things be different in the Church? Or at the very, very least, wouldn't things be different in our own lives—the lives of individual disciples? Well, Thomas couldn't see that anything was different. That's why he wanted—no, demanded to see Jesus. Specifically Jesus with his wounds. Only then would Thomas know that something was truly different.

What did that precocious granddaughter say? "All I hear around this house is 'Jesus' and 'germs' and I've never seen either one of them!" Boy, for not being able to see germs, we sure do spend our time acting as if they exist! They command our constant attention. Can't see 'em but our time is consumed as we wash, scrub, and disinfect our houses, bodies and anything else we think might harbor them.

Maybe we should do the same with Jesus. I don't mean disinfect him! What I mean is we ought to **act** as though Jesus lives. That's what we proclaim. That's what we believe. So let's start making obvious in our daily journey that the Risen Jesus is more than wishful thinking—that, in fact, he's the world's joyful reality. If Jesus really is our living Lord, he ought to command our attention and consume our time.

What Jesus gave to the disciples that first evening, and to Thomas one week later was exactly what they needed to make obvious in **their** daily journey that Jesus lives. First, he gave them an abiding peace to quell their fears—the kind of peace that he said would be part and parcel of life in his kingdom. Then Jesus breathed his Spirit upon them. That word for "breathed" is a word similar to the one we find in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, when God breathed into the nostrils of the first human being, giving him life. Here is our Risen Jesus, bestowing on his friends the life-giving breath of God. Here is Jesus preparing them for real Easter life!

And one other thing about that evening—did you notice that although Jesus offers for Thomas to touch his wounds, Thomas believes without doing that. Simply seeing the wounded Jesus (hands, feet, side) was enough to see the risen Jesus. And so I wonder if perhaps when we are a little like Thomas, we might do well to go and look for the wounds in others. It seems to me we may see Jesus when we really look at the wounded and suffering around us—one another, and those beyond our doors. It also seems to me that others will see Jesus and believe in him when we **do** the ministry of Jesus in the world—which means caring for the wounded and suffering around us.

Melissa Sevier, a Presbyterian pastor from Kentucky, told this story on her blog: Several years ago she spent a week in New York state chaperoning a youth mission trip. The kids repaired roofs on cabins at a church camp. At week's end, they took a day trip to New York City. None of the youth had ever been there before. Each carried a brown bag lunch supplied by the camp. Taking the subway, these 18 young people and their chaperones got off at Grand Central Station. The youth were struck by the sheer number of homeless people living on the streets, constantly asking for handouts. They also were amazed at the number of people who just walked past them. City folks were used to this sight, but not these 18 Kentucky kids. The youth asked Melissa if they could give their bag lunches to the homeless: "Is it OK if we give our lunches away? They say they want money for food. We have food we can give them." Melissa replied, "Look, lunch is expensive here in the city. If you give them your bag lunch, you might not have enough money for lunch, let alone souvenirs."

The kids said, "That's OK." So Melissa watched as her 18 young friends gave away their bag lunches. Some of the homeless took the food gratefully, even giving the young people a blessing. Some said nothing as they received. Some refused, and the youth moved on to someone else who would accept the bag lunch. Some of the young people shook hands with the homeless, or sat down to talk with those now eating their sandwich.

Finally, it was time to go, but the kids walked more slowly now, noticing every person they passed by. As Melissa reflected on that day, she realized that all along she had expected to see Jesus at the church camp where they labored all week. Instead, she noted this: "...that day, 18 teenagers saw Jesus in people they met on the city sidewalks. And I saw Jesus in 18 young people I already knew."

I know Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." But maybe, maybe there is a way to see. **AMEN.**

Copyright © 2016, Nancy R. Easton. All rights reserved.



www.trinitycamphill.org