



“Show Me” – TouchPoint for April 7, 2021

John 20:19-31(MSG). To Believe

¹⁹⁻²⁰ Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.” Then he showed them his hands and side.

TOUCH POINT

²⁰⁻²¹ The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were awestruck. Jesus repeated his greeting: “Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you.” ²²⁻²³ Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said. “If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good. If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?”

²⁴⁻²⁵ But Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, “We saw the Master.” But he said, “Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won’t believe it.”

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were again in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.” ²⁷ Then he focused his attention on Thomas. “Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don’t be unbelieving. Believe.” ²⁸ Thomas said, “My Master! My God!” ²⁹ Jesus said, “So, you believe because you’ve seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing.”

³⁰⁻³¹ Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.

Grace and Peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

“Unless I see the wounds in his hands and touch and feel his side...”

And Jesus shows Thomas his wounds. There is something astounding about this passage. The resurrected Lord still carries with him the wounds of the world. Think about that. The resurrected Lord still carries with him the wounds of the world.

I know we call this the “Doubting Thomas” passage, but I think we sell it short if we do. How about we call it the “Insightful Thomas” passage instead. Because perhaps Thomas was on to something.

“Unless I see the wounds in his hands and touch and feel his side...”

You see, if this is the case, then the risen Christ is not restored to original perfection as if nothing happened, rather, he still bears the scars of the world. He still is involved in the world. He is not floating above it all, unmoved. But still in it. Is this what Thomas wanted to see? Is this the only Jesus he could recognize? One who was still intimately involved in this world and its pain and suffering. This was the Jesus that Thomas knew. This was the Jesus he needed to see. The one who had been crucified.

“Unless I see the wounds in his hands and touch and feel his side...”

Or perhaps Thomas demands to see the wounds, because the risen Jesus challenges his whole idea of God's primary purpose. Thomas, probably like the rest of us, thinks the primary purpose of God is to

protect us rather than transform us. We look for a God to defend the status quo, to protect the status quo, to uphold the status quo. And so, if Jesus stays dead, then Thomas was simply mistaken in whom he thought represented God ... and God can remain the same.

But if Jesus is raised from the dead, then Thomas's whole concept of God needs to change. From a God who primarily defends and protects, to a God who transforms and renews and changes. A God who enters into pain and suffering, and even death. And so, to call this passage the "Doubting Thomas" story is arrogant, pompous and absurd. Thomas has more insight into the crucified AND risen Jesus than I ever could. And the fact that Jesus doesn't tear him a new one, but rather holds out his hands and shows him his side, only emphasizes that Jesus affirms Thomas is on the right track. Because, sometimes, having doubts about the way things are, simply means you are having greater insights into what could be.

You see, Easter Sunday does not rescue Good Friday, it reinforces it. Easter does not cover up Good Friday. It makes it come alive.

Easter resurrects Good Friday.

The Christ that Thomas knows, is the one who suffers and dies on a cross. If that is not the one who is resurrected, then Thomas will have none of it. It can't just be the body of Jesus that is raised, but the life of Jesus as well. And that is what those marks represent: Jesus' life. They are the essence of who Jesus is. And if the marks are not raised, with the body, Thomas is not interested.

For Thomas, the life of Jesus has to be raised, as well as the body.

You know, in our creeds, we keep saying, "we believe in the resurrection of the body." Perhaps we should be saying, "we believe in the resurrection of the **LIFE** of Jesus" ... the **WAY** he lived. That might point us in a better direction. After all, Jesus didn't say, "I am the body" but "I am the Way and the Life."

Now personally, I would rather see the Jesus that can go through walls, that can disappear in an instant from the disciples in Emmaus. That's the Jesus I want to see. A post-Easter Jesus. But the one who still bears the marks, still bears the wounds, still bears the scars? I would much prefer to move beyond that.

Why can't I just have the Easter glory and leave the crucifixion in the dust?

Why can't I leave the crucified Jesus buried in the tomb and just have the resurrected Jesus to hang with?

Because it seems, the only Jesus we can hang with post Easter, is the same one who hung on a cross. Apparently, if you want to hang with Easter Jesus...you have to hang with Good Friday Jesus. Or to put it another way, if you want to hang with Jesus...you have to hang with Jesus.

"Unless I see the wounds in his hands and touch and feel his side..."

A Gallup poll was taken recently, perhaps you read about it. Less than 50% of the country now says they belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque. Or religious organization. There's a lot of bemoaning of the fact that people don't want to join, "What's wrong with them?" Now, I just happen to think that is the wrong question. I tend to think the question should be, "What's wrong with us in the church? You see, if people are having their doubts about the church, and who can blame them, perhaps we should see the issue in light of today's passage.

Perhaps what the people are saying to us in the church is, “Unless I see your wounds, unless I see your scars, I won’t believe.” And the question is, “Are we willing to show them?” So much of Christianity is about conquering, winning, victory. Just look around at how many churches are called ‘Victory Church’ or ‘Champions Church’. But how many churches are called ‘Wounded Church’, or ‘Broken Church’? But the Christ we say we follow, the Christ we say we serve, was one who entered into the pain and suffering of the world. The Christ we say we belong to bore the pain of the world, became the wounded of the world. And still bears the marks in the resurrection.

Perhaps what the world is waiting to see, is the wounds of the world borne by us... entered into by us. God, not as escape, but God as incarnation. Entering into the pain and suffering of the world. And as Easter people, we seek to resurrect ‘Good Friday’, not do an end run around it, or escape it.

“Unless I see your wounds, unless I see your scars, I won’t believe.”

You see, the problem may not be that people don’t want to belong to the church. The problem may just be that the church doesn’t want to belong to the Christ. Perhaps we’ve been so busy worshipping Jesus we’ve forgotten to follow him. Because, to show the world our wounds, means we must follow Jesus into the woundedness of the world. This is after all, where the Christ is to be found. *“I was hungry and you fed me. I was in prison and you visited me.”*

The end goal then, of following the Christ, is not individual salvation, over and against the pagan heathens. The end goal is a restoration of all. A bringing together of all things. To follow Jesus is to live in the truth and understanding that all belong, and all belongs. Life, death, pain, joy, suffering and health. All have been taken up into and are part of the Divine.

“Unless I see your wounds, unless I see your scars, I won’t believe.”

This is what a doubting world is asking of us. Are we still a part of this world or have we used our Christianity as an escape? Leaving the world to fend for itself. This is what is so demonic about the “Left Behind” book series, that was popular awhile back. It speaks of a god who will leave most of the world behind to suffer, and save only a few. No wonder people are leaving the church in droves. What kind of loving God does that?

“Unless I see your wounds, unless I see your scars, I won’t believe.”

This is what a doubting world is asking of us. Are we still a part of this world or have we used our Christianity as an escape? Leaving the world to fend for itself.

In this meal, we have our answer. In this meal, the crucified and risen Christ connects himself to the everyday elements of bread and wine. In the everyday act of eating, we encounter the Christ. In the simple act of eating, where our dependence and interdependence with the earth and all creation is acted out at its most base level, there is the Christ.

Wherever bread is broken and shared, the Christ is broken and shared. It is, as my friend Henry has so eloquently stated, “Where broken meets broken.”

“Unless I see your wounds, unless I see your scars, I won’t believe.”

Thomas and the world seem to know, what we in the church have forgotten. It is in the connecting of our brokenness, with the Christ and one another, that we are made whole.

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Spirit Divine

(Keith Duke)

Spirit of Love, enfold and teach us.
Spirit of Peace, rest deep within
Spirit of change, transform and heal us
Spirit Divine

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Healer of Our Every Ill

(Marty Haugen)

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow. Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope
beyond our sorrow.

You who know our fears and sadness. Grace us with your peace and gladness.

Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *Refrain*

In the pain and joy beholding, how your grace is still unfolding

Give us all your vision God of love. *Refrain*

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Taize Reflections)

Benediction

A Celtic Blessing

(Margaret Rizza)

The guarding of the God of Life be on you, the guarding of loving Christ be on you,
the guarding of the Holy Spirit be on you, to aid and uphold you each day and night of your life.

The guarding of God, the guarding of Christ, the guarding of the Spirit be upon you.

