



Life Resurrected – Touchpoint for April 12, 2023

John 20:19-31 (The MSG) 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.

“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.

I think it was Rudolf Bultmann... and I may be mistaken here but I think it was Bultmann who was once asked if he believed in the physical resurrection of Jesus' body, and he said something to the effect of, “If Jesus' body was physically resurrected, but his life and spirit haven't been resurrected in you, it's irrelevant. And if Jesus' body wasn't resurrected, but his life and spirit have been resurrected in you, it's irrelevant.”

I think this is what Thomas is trying to get at when he demands to see the wounds.

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...”

There aren't two Jesuses – one pre-Easter and one post-Easter – there is one Jesus.

And that's the problem. You see, I want to be saved FROM my humanity, not saved in my humanity, or have my humanity saved. “Just my soul, please, Jesus.” And let's leave this messy, smelly, flabby body behind.

And as an added bonus, I then won't have to be concerned about other people's physical needs, just their souls. So what if they are hungry, or thirsty, or sick. Our goal is to get them to the next level, the other worldly, the spiritual realm.

It really would be a whole lot more convenient if Jesus just focused on our souls... if he was just raised as a whole different creation with no connection to this physical world.

Let's face it. We don't really want a God who rises from the dead. We want a God who never would have been crucified in the first place.

But if a resurrected God is what we have, can we at least have him not bear the scars of this earthly life?

Or as someone once said, “Why can't we just live in Easter joy? Why do we need to keep going back to the cross?”

Here's why: Easter doesn't rescue us from the cross, it reinforces it. Easter doesn't take us away from this world, but drives us back to it.

A Christ who still bears the marks of the cross does not have as his goal making us “spiritual, just not religious.” No, I dare say, a Christ who still bears the marks of the cross has as his goal making us “physical, just not religious.”

But that is not the way we think of the resurrected Jesus or the resurrected life. No, all the problems of the world should be put behind Jesus. All the problems of the world should be put behind us. To live the resurrected life means to float above it all. Untouched, unhindered, unmoved by the world's troubles.

But here's the thing, the incarnation doesn't end with Easter... it continues in you and me. Easter doesn't just mean the body of Jesus is raised, but the life he lived is raised as well, and continues on in you and me.

You see, even when Jesus does ascend to heaven, he pours his spirit back down on those here on earth on Pentecost, according to the book of Acts. But in John's gospel, he breathes his Spirit into them immediately after the resurrection. Easter and Pentecost are collapsed into one event. Even as Easter folds back into Good Friday.

It's all there in this one passage. The risen lord, the giving of the spirit, the marks of the cross.

Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost all there in one evening – one event. And it's not a buffet we can choose from... it's more like a stew.

You see, the spirit that gets poured out here is the spirit of the crucified **AND** risen Lord.

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.”

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you...” into the world that *“God so loved that he sent...”* not just his only Son, but now you and me.

You see, the incarnation does not stop with the resurrection. Easter doesn't just mean the body of Jesus is raised, but the life he lived is raised as well and continues on in you and me.

That's why the weekly ritual we are given to re-member ourselves to Jesus isn't reenacting the running to an empty tomb, but the sharing in the body and blood of the One who was broken for us.

We are re-membered to the One, who in the night in which he was betrayed, and who was soon to bear the wounds of hammer and nails, said:

“Take and eat. Take and drink. This is me for you.”

We are re-membered to the risen One who still bears the wounds. Because you see, the incarnation does not stop with the resurrection.

It isn't just the body of Jesus that is raised, but the life of Jesus that is raised as well... to continue on... in you and me.

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Songs

Be Still

(London Fox Taizé 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

(Taizé 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.