

Easter 2 B - 04/07/2024

In a few of the churches that I have served for a period of times during worship, people were given an opportunity to share God moments. God moments were where they had seen God at work in the past week. Another way we can ask the question is to ask, “Where have you seen Jesus this past week?”

Often, what we hear and see news today it is often negative, it doesn't help through the day. It may make us angry, sad or depressed. We know the news does not always give us the good news. Although, at the end of a broadcast and sometimes only on Fridays, they do share a good news story.

As Christians, it is important for us to stay connected to Jesus and one hour a week does not do it. We are bombarded with so many different things even in a day. There are family issues, work issues, school issues, health issues, whatever group we may belong to will have some issues or negativity.

In this Easter season, in order to experience and be connected to our risen Savior, I challenge us to ask this question at the end of every day, “Where have I seen Jesus today?” What a positive and healthy way of connecting with Jesus at the end of the day.

It may be much easier to hand all of those things that have stressed us out during the day over to Jesus. By asking this question, the answer can remind us that we were not alone during the day. Jesus was there walking beside us and in us. Could this be where the peace comes in?

In our gospel lesson today, we find the disciples locked in a room for fear of the Jewish authorities. Just as we made it clear on Good Friday, it was the Jewish authorities who enforce they what they feel was God's law. We can't lump everyone into a category.

In the Gospel of John, the disciples had heard that Jesus had risen from Mary Magdelene. Peter and the other disciple, who may have been John, ran to the tomb and saw what Mary Magdelene had seen. It says the other disciple believed and they went back home.

Since they had not seen Jesus, they still didn't know how the Jewish authorities were going to respond to this. They could be out looking for the disciples. Jesus knew that they needed to have some tangible evidence that he had risen. Thus, he appeared to them through the locked doors.

Jesus first words were, “Peace be with you”. He then showed them his hands and side. At that point the disciples believed it was Jesus and they rejoiced. Jesus said to the again, “Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, so I send you”. He

breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” In a sense this is John’s account of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, the part of the trinity that would live within them and empower and guide them in continuing Jesus work on earth. There was one disciple missing, Thomas. We don’t know exactly what he was out doing, but even if he was fearful, it didn’t stop him from going outside the doors.

When Thomas returned, the disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”. Thomas said, “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”. He has often received the nickname , ‘the doubter’. But was he really any different than the other disciples? He had even gone outside the locked room.

Jesus came back at that point and offered to let Thomas touch his hands and side and said do not doubt, but believe. Thomas made a statement of faith, “My Lord and my God!”. The other disciples rejoiced, but had still not left the room. Jesus did not have to come back, he could have relied on the other disciples, but Jesus knew that Thomas needed this reconnection.

Thomas is not any different than any other follower of Jesus. It was and is hard to believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead. It is hard to believe that Jesus takes the time to love each person on this earth. It really is a divine thing and definitely not humanly possible.

It is when we doubt that we begin to ask questions and can begin to learn and grow. We can learn things by rote, but then they are only facts and often do not sink in as reality for us. What do we usually say, “The only stupid question, is the one that is not asked”. Jesus knew his disciples were questioning his resurrection, thus he came to them and was commissioning them to continue his work.

He knew they were fearful and would not be able to continue his work unless he reassured them that he had risen and was still there for him. They need his peace to break down the walls of fear. It was in their reconnection with Jesus that the walls of fear began to be broken down and they once again experienced his peace.

We are no different. There are days that we struggle to experience Jesus and receive his peace. Sometimes we need to look for Jesus activity in our world. Jesus does and will come to us as we seek him. Jesus knew his disciples were seeking him and his peace to begin to break down their walls of fear.

Our Lutheran theology says that we cannot even come to Jesus on our own. Luther’s explanation to the first article of the Apostle’s Creed says that – I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord

or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith.

Thus, I believe the Holy Spirit is prompting us to ask questions and draw us closer to Jesus. The Holy Spirit can help us break down our walls of fear in order to experience Jesus and his peace. Thankfully we are not on our own. Jesus model for us was to let go and realize that it is not all about us.

As followers of the resurrected Christ, I challenge each of us to find or continue finding a few minutes every morning to remember who we are and whose we are. In reality, remembering our baptism at the beginning of worship during the Easter season, helps us remember who we are and whose we are.

I have chosen a few verse from next week's Gospel lesson for us to recite every morning or at some point during the day.

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. Luke 24:45-48 NRSVU Please detach this from your bulletin to use this week.

Then at the end of the day ask the question "Where did I see Jesus at work?" I would be happy to hear them. Please e-mail them to me. The Holy Spirit will be with us to encourage us and help us to see Jesus at work. This is what will bring Jesus' peace to our lives. Doing these things will help us stay connected to Jesus and not get bogged down in the crap of our world.

Let us pray, Gracious God you are always wanting to connect with us. You came down to earth through your son Jesus. He continues to model for us how to connect. Today we were reminded that your Holy Spirit is always with us to help us be connected to you. We thank you for this as we cannot do it on our own. May your Spirit prompt us to read the Bible verse at least at the beginning of the day and to help us reflect at the end of the day where we have seen you at work in us and others. In Jesus name, Amen.