

Sermon- Our Savior's Lutheran Church - April 28th 2019

Text- John 20:19-31

Jesus Appears Also To Us

Throughout Christendom, this Sunday, today, is known as Low Sunday. I'm not sure if you are aware of that. It's called "Low Sunday" because after the "high" of Easter (meaning the church pews were filled), we hit the lows- church pews are rather empty. Apparently going to church two weeks in a row is a little too much. I remember my first call out of Seminary was in Rochester, NY, home of Kodak and Xerox.

Since I was the new kid on the block, I always preached on Low Sundays. The Sunday after Easter, after Christmas, Memorial Day, Labor Day, 4th of July - you get the picture. Most Pastors, who have either an Intern or an Associate Pastor, almost always have them preach on this "low Sunday". But for us every Sunday is a high Sunday. We recharge our batteries and receive the power of the Holy Spirit as we commune together.

The Gospel I just read to you is the classic text of Jesus showing up to the disciples who are gathered behind locked doors. Jesus showing up and appearing to the disciples.

*** Cute Story

It was Palm Sunday, but because of a sore throat, 6 year old Johnny stayed home from church with a sitter. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm fronds. Johnny asked what they were for. "People held them over Jesus head as he walked by" his father told him. "Wouldn't you know it," Johnny fumed, "The one Sunday I don't go and he shows up!"

Actually Jesus always shows up.

So yes, it is Low Sunday. But the text today is anything but a low message. Let's look at the Sitz im Leben. The setting in life. Always important to do that when we are studying the Biblical Text. It was Easter evening, and the Bible says that the disciples were gathered in an upstairs room, perhaps the same room where they ate the last supper. The doors were locked because they were afraid. The Roman authorities might have some nails left over.

Actually not all the disciples were there. Judas was missing - we know that story. And Thomas, the very faithful one, was also missing. Thomas who said, when learning that Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die, "Then let us go there with him and die with him." Thomas was missing because he chooses to grieve in his own way. Well, while Thomas was gone, Jesus appears to the disciples and they know that there had been a resurrection. They report this to Thomas, who didn't buy it. He says, "Unless I see for myself the nail holes in his hands, and until I place my hand in the wound in his side, I will not believe." He needed cold hard evidence, CSI facts, then he will believe. Not so crazy. Many of us are like that when we deal with the scriptures. Give us cold hard facts and then we will believe.

And so the Gospel today is one week later and Thomas is present. "Thomas" Jesus said "put your finger in this nail hole. Here, reach out your hand and touch the wound in my side. And then believe, Thomas." But the kicker is the next comment. For Thomas and you and I. Jesus says, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who do not see, and yet believe." Wow.

And Jesus does some more stuff for the disciples and us. He breathes into them giving them his total presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. He also gives them his peace. His shalom. The gift of his presence. But let's get back to that comment about Blessed are those who do not see, and yet believe. Thomas, like us are seeing is believing people. That's how we function in life.

A brand new grandmother gets the phone call from her daughter who just birthed a baby girl 30 minutes earlier. It doesn't matter how detailed the daughter's description is - "Mom, she has thick hair, big dark eyes and the most incredible long fingers." Grandma remains incredulous until she can get to Pittsburgh and actually see and hold this newborn herself. Only then will she believe this is real.

Yes seeing is believing. But Jesus reverses it. He says believing is seeing.

Let's do a survey. Raise your hands if you have seen Jesus in bodily form. (Pastor asks the congregation). Yup. Nobody. And yet you are still here working on faith. We are here with no CSI stuff and yet we believe. Why? Because we feel his presence. We feel his presence.

We kneel at the Communion rail or come up for intinction- we feel his presence.

We sing a hymn that touches us - we feel his presence.

We look at our children and realize we are blessed - we feel his presence.

We hold a hand of a loved one in a hospital room - we feel his presence.

We gather at a funeral for a loved one - we feel his presence.

We gather food for the homeless because Jesus asked us to - we feel his presence.

We really forgive someone - we feel his presence.

Yes we are blessed because we have not seen but believe because we have felt his presence. Always.

He appeared to his disciples and he appears also to us.

Heck. This is not Low Sunday - but for us it's High Sunday. Jesus is always with us. Believing is seeing!

Amen. Let it be so.