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John 20:19-31
 Acts 2:14a, 22-32
 Psalm 16
 1 Peter 1:3-9

April 12, 2026
 The Second Sunday of Easter

When I was a little girl, I loved to play in the dirt. I would spend hours outdoors, watching bugs, catching butterflies, chasing grasshoppers, listening to birds. And I knew the best places to find interesting things.

One place full of interesting things was a small rock wall that ran along my grandmother's dirt driveway. It wasn't a fancy wall and it wasn't tall. It was more like a little ledge of large stones that had been placed one on top of the other in a makeshift kind of way. Purple phlox grew randomly out of the crevices. So unassuming, you might walk by and not even notice that the rocks were anything special.

But, to me...they were pure joy.

I would spend hours at this humble rock wall. Exploring. Noticing. Investigating. Because underneath each rock were these incredible tiny villages made up of carefully crafted tunnels and pathways. They were vibrant and full of life.

There was the rock where the big black ants lived and another for the little black ants. And there was the rock where the red ants lived. Then...there was my favorite...the rock where the rollie pollies lived.

For me, looking underneath those rocks and seeing those little villages held an incredible magic...a discovery so special, each stone a beautiful story of life.

I have always been fascinated about the stories that linger behind things. Behind rocks, or doors, or walls. Your story and mine.

And so it caught my attention this week when Jesus keeps showing up on the other side of closed doorways, appearing behind walls and encountering the disciples who lingered there. The text for today tells us...

"...the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked out of fear, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." And then we hear... "A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them..."

It's kind of odd really. It's almost like a magician's tale – appearing and disappearing at will to the astonishment of the weary and fearful disciples.

I love that Jesus suddenly peeks in on them, unannounced. I am sure they were busy going about their routine...trying to make sense of all that had been going on. Probably feeling isolated and alone. And, suddenly, there he is. Comforting and guiding them. Telling them to be at peace!

And, I love that we get to see the interplay of Thomas and Jesus together. Jesus peeking behind the walls at Thomas; Thomas wanting to take a peek at Jesus.

The moment is so deeply honest. Like Thomas, we all want to touch and feel and see Jesus. And we want Jesus to see us. It's a mutual longing, a desire to know and to be known.

As we look closer at our text, we find some important insights about what this interaction has to teach us about how we might encounter Jesus behind our own walls.

We are told in the first verse of our Gospel reading that the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked. In Greek, this idea of locked doors translates as a shutting off of compassion, to be devoid of care towards another person. It can even be translated as obstructing the entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

In other words, you might say that the closed doors of the disciples were not simply a physical closure but a spiritual closure. A perceived absence from God and from the one whom they had come to love and to follow.

And that makes sense based upon what they have just gone through. The disciples' world was dark and they had become doubtful and fearful. It's no surprise that spiritually they felt cut off from God.

And then our text takes a critical turn...when the disciples finally *see* Jesus, that moment when Jesus appears, the *seeing* that is presented isn't just physical sight. It's uncovering a deeper truth. The moment when you finally know something deep within your soul...not because someone has told you to believe but because you have experienced that belief.

And, then, we are told that Jesus breathes on them.

This is so important. We only see this particular usage of the word "breathe" one other time in the entire Bible. It's when God breathed on Adam and he became a living soul. And now, here, in John, Jesus breathes on his disciples, in essence giving them new life.

Think of the power of that moment. A movement from darkness and doubt, as the rock is lifted, the door opened, the walls traversed, and Jesus appeared. And we can only imagine what that moment was like as they spent time in one another's presence. Seeing and being seen. Knowing and being known. Loving one another.

That made me wonder...How often are we closed off because we don't feel seen or known? When we lose hope in others, in ourselves, in God? We let the rocks and the doors and the walls that cover us keep out the love we need to give and the love we need to receive. We cut ourselves off from compassion and even like the disciples from accepting the kingdom of heaven.

Our doors are shut. And we dare anyone to look inside.

But that's when Jesus shows up...behind our walls...and breathes new life into the darkness we may be experiencing. It's the realization that we are seen and known and loved as Jesus shines new light into our hearts so that we can live.