

The Rev. Emily Dunevant

April 28, 2019  
Second Sunday of Easter

John 20:19-31  
Acts 5:27-32  
Psalm 150  
Revelation 1:4-8

---

Thomas, in case you didn't know, is one of my favorite biblical figures. He's up there with Zaccheus in my mind...one of those figures that is simply misunderstood. The kind of figure who has become easy for us to pigeon hole into a stereotypical role of a second rate Jesus follower. The one who couldn't quite it right, who doubted, who lived a rather unorthodox life, not quite in line with those more faithful folks. We point to these type of figures as the people we don't want to be like. Of course, we are more faithful. Of course, we don't need proof. And so comes the perception of what a good Christian is all about.

But, truth be told, I would rather be like Thomas than any of the other disciples. Because, to me, Thomas was full of a deep desire to know Jesus. What you may call doubt, I would call faith. Faith that there is more to the story. Faith that the risen Christ is something he needs to understand. Faith to believe that Jesus died on that cross for him. So this morning, let's take a little creative license and rethink who have understood Thomas to be.

Let me start by setting up the story this way...If it wasn't faith that led Thomas to demand to see Jesus' wounds, I think Thomas would have simply walked away in disbelief when he heard the other disciples talking about what they had seen. Yet, his need to see Jesus, to touch him, to talk to him was so strong that he would settle for nothing less than the reality of Jesus' wounds. He wanted to know what happened. And Jesus tells him...Thomas, put your hand here – see for yourself.

Think of the power of that moment - when faith is not just a hope but a reality. When Thomas sees and feels the scars. When he begins to comprehend this incredible act of love that has taken place – love out of darkness, love out of hate, love out of injustice. And it hits him. My Lord, My God this is what you have done!

This is not doubt shifting to belief. This is so much more. It is a full understanding of what has transpired. A moment when you can't look away because you finally see the depth of what was done to Jesus, by Jesus, and for you.

There's a poem by a wonderful writer named Andrew King and his portrayal of Thomas and this moment of deep understanding describes the depth of tangible faith that is taking place. It goes like this...

## WHAT THOMAS WANTS

Thomas knows all about crucifixion.  
Knows the nails driven into the victim  
really tear the flesh,  
damage the bones.

And he knows that this  
is a crucifying world,  
with all its violence,  
greed and oppression

still hammering nails into the hands of justice,  
still thrusting spears through the ribs of love,  
still hanging mercy and kindness to die  
and sealing up the tomb.

Thomas knows all about it.  
So he knows that any real resurrection  
will have to come out of ruin,  
will have to come out of suffering,  
will have to come out still bearing the scars  
inflicted by the unjust world.

Ask him not  
if he believes in  
merely a God  
who is greater than suffering or death;  
any God worth the name  
would surely prove immortal,  
who may be able to pretend our pain  
but could never share it in truth.

No, what Thomas wants to see  
is the Lord who rises from  
death by crucifixion,

who rises  
from the worst that our world can do:  
who rises  
from hells of corruption and cruelty,  
who rises  
from violence and terror and hate,

who rises  
from rape and torture and war,  
who rises  
from hunger and disease and squalor,  
who rises  
torn and terribly scarred  
yet walking among us still,

who will touch *us* in  
our woundedness,  
who will hold *us* in  
our brokenness,  
who sees in *us*  
the prints left by the nails,  
who will put his own hurt hand upon  
our heartache, fear and despair  
and breathe his healing peace  
into our souls.

This is who Thomas wants to see – the only  
Lord he wants to believe in.

Thomas just wants to see  
Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

I have to say, this is the most beautiful portrayal of Thomas I have ever heard. How could you ever call this doubt? Maybe the real story is the depth of his understanding when he touches Jesus' wounds. The moment when he understands the heartbreak of the world, the cruelty. The moment when he understands the full scope of the injustice and pain that people endure. And, then the moment when he realizes that there is no struggle, no hate, no hardship that would overcome the power of Christ to rise above.

This is the God whom Thomas sees. It is the God whom comes down to be with us and it is God who breathed life into Jesus and will indeed breathe life into all of us – in our woundedness, in our brokenness, in our fear and in our despair. It is the God who calls forth our strength and our hope and most importantly, our faith.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://earth2earth.wordpress.com/2016/03/27/poem-for-the-sunday-lectionary-easter-2-yr-c/>

Martin Luther, in a sermon from 1521, describes this realization of faith this way, *"... it is not sufficient simply to believe Christ rose from the dead, for this produces neither peace nor joy, neither power nor authority; but you must believe that he rose for your sake, for your benefit, and was not glorified for his own sake; but that he might help you and all who believe in him, and that through his resurrection sin, death and hell are vanquished and the victory given to you."*<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the wounds remind us that our lives matter – all of our story, the struggles, the joy, the pain, the hope. The wounds remind us that Jesus has been there and whatever we may face, God can work for good to lift us out of the darkness. The wounds may remain but Thomas reminds us to take time to honor the path we have traveled, honor the scars, and rejoice in the victory that Christ won for us.

Like Thomas, we just want to see Jesus.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lectionarycentral.com/easter1/LutherGospel.html>