

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I. Intro

Have you ever been devastated?

Have things ever looked so bad that you thought they would never change?

Have you ever felt so miserable that you thought you would never be happy again?

Have you ever felt so lost and alone that you thought no one could ever find you – not even God?

Well, that's how the Disciples felt that first day of the week – after the Passover Sabbath when Jesus was killed.

Totally lost and alone.

I. Devastation and Hope

A. Everything they worked for was gone – all their hopes and dreams were nothing but dust.

1. What had they been doing the past couple of years?
2. They had wasted their lives following – following what:
 - A big joke – a religious fanatic – a lying madman?
3. And what did they have to show for it – nothing;
 - nothing except being hounded by the Romans and searched for by the Religious Authorities.
4. They hid out in that room where they had eaten the Passover with Jesus because they had nowhere else to go.

5. Yet, everywhere they looked they saw things that reminded them of him – HIM – the man they followed – the man they gave their lives to – the man they thought might be God’s Messiah.

6. And now look at him – he was DEAD – dead and buried – executed like a common criminal.

7. All they could do was lie low for a couple of days and then slip out to town a couple at a time and try to blend in with the rest of the Passover crowds as they returned home.

8. Thomas was out right now – risking his life – scouting around – checking to see if the time was right – and picking up a few supplies.

9. Unless he said otherwise, they’d make their break tomorrow.

B. They were all huddled in a circle, making a few last minute plans, when all of a sudden JESUS WAS STANDING THERE – RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THEM.

1. He said, “Hi guys, peace be with you.”

2. They were stunned – they were flabbergasted.

3. How could this be – Jesus was dead and in the tomb – yet, here he was.

4. Oh sure, the women had tried to tell them some crazy story about the tomb being empty and Angels and Jesus being risen – but who’s going to listen to a bunch of grief-stricken hysterical women – probably the Temple Guard or the Roman Soldiers found where the body was and had taken it away for more desecration.

5. But here he was – right in front of them – Dear God, could it be true?



"Still Doubting" (2010), oil on canvas, John Granville Gregory.

2nd Sunday of Easter
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6. And then as if to reassure them he said, “Yeah, it’s really me. See, look at my hands and my side – it’s me alright.”

7. “And then he said, “Here, receive the Holy Spirit,” and breathed on them.

C. And before you know it, those same people who were cowering behind closed doors “for fear of the Jews” were now in the Temple boldly preaching about Jesus and doing miracles in his name.

1. Our first lesson told one story of how the Chief Priests even had them arrested and put in prison – only to find when they went to question them that they weren’t in jail anymore – they were back in the Temple preaching.

2. The High Priest questioned them saying, “We gave you strict orders not to preach in his name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching...”

3. To which Peter responds, “We must obey God rather than any human authority.”

4. Are these the same guys who were hiding behind locked doors – who were inconsolable at the loss of Jesus – and at a total loss what to do?

5. Are these the same guys who cut and ran when Jesus was arrested and even DENIED knowing him in order to save their skins?

6. Are these the same guys who abandoned Jesus and left him to die alone?

7. Well, yes – and no.

8. They are the same individuals – but they have now been empowered by the risen Christ to bring his GOOD NEWS to all people.

9. You see – this is a story of being sent.

II. Being sent

A. Often, we spend all our time focusing on Thomas.

1. Thomas, who wasn't there – Thomas who wouldn't believe what they others told him about Jesus – Thomas who only wanted the same proof that they had seen.

2. And so he gets called, "Doubting Thomas" – and on some calendars today is called, "Thomas Sunday."

3. But if we spend all our time on Thomas, we lose track of the fact that earlier in the story, when he appeared on the evening of that first Easter, Jesus breathed on the Disciples and empowered them and sent them out.

4. He said, "As the Father has sent me, **so I send you.**"

5. This is a story of EMPOWERMENT – this is a story of SENDING OUT.

6. And Jesus has been saying it to countless generations for 2,000 years – "As the Father has sent me, so I send YOU."

7. And when Jesus says "You" – he means YOU!

8. Jesus says the same thing to US: "As the Father sends me, so I send YOU – and you, and you, and you."

9. And he empowers us to respond, just as he did the Disciples.
- and he sends us out just as he did the Disciples.

B. As Saint Teresa of Avila – the runner up in the closest finalist voting ever in Lent Madness, and winner of the Silver Halo – once said,

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours,

No hands but yours, no feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out to the world;

Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good;

Yours are the hands with which he is to bless people now."

2. And it's true.

3. We are the ones who have experienced the Risen Christ and are empowered and sent out in his name – just as the Disciples were that first Easter night.

4. But we are NOT called to do this on our own – we are empowered by Jesus – empowered by the community we call St. Columba’s; empowered by the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist; and sent out to be Christ’s representatives in the world.

III. Sent in Transition

A. “Oh but we can’t,” we want to say, “We’re in a time of Transition – we can’t do anything like that.”

1. You don’t think the Disciples were in a time of Transition – maybe the greatest transition ever.

2. Of course, we can go out and share good news of God’s love made known in Jesus’ Resurrection – we just need to go out and do it.

3. And we do it all the time:

- every time a bag of food is delivered – that’s sharing God’s love
- every time a preschooler is taught a lesson – that’s sharing the love of God
- every time a person at home is able to tune into a service – that’s sharing the love of God
- every time a group is able to meet here for mutual support – that’s sharing the love of God
- every time people gather to learn more about their faith – or walk the labyrinth – or worship together – that’s sharing the love of God.

4. And you can keep right on sharing the love of God – even in a time of transition.

B. Let me put it this way – **If Jesus breathed on you, what would you be empowered to do?**

1. If Jesus breathed on you, what would you be empowered to do?

2. What great work could you do?

- What small thing might you accomplish?

3. If Jesus breathed on you, what would be accomplished?

4. Well, Jesus HAS breathed on you, when you received the Holy Spirit at your Baptism – and he keeps on breathing on you every time you receive his Body and Blood.

5. All we have to do is get out there and put it to work.

6. Yes, it might be a little more difficult in a time of transition when clear lines of authority and decision-making can get blurry,

- but you have a great team of leaders in your Vestry, and they are compiling a great team in the Search Committee and Transition Committee – you just have to rely on them and PRAY for them as they seek the next person God has in mind to help lead St. Columba's.

7. And in turn, continue to work to share God's love.

Conclusion

The Risen Christ continues to come to us and empowers us to share God's love in our time and space.

Again and again he says to us, "As the Father has sent me, so I send YOU."

If Jesus breathed on you, what would you be empowered to do?

Let Us Pray

God of truth, marked and pierced and open to our touch; you embraced Thomas and breathed your peace upon him: free us from our clinging need for certainty without trust and teach us faith in the heart of love unknown; that we may continue to share your love in our world; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. AMEN.

(Shakespeare p.119 – adapted)

