

“In Spite of Many Failures”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

Second Sunday of Easter

April 12, 2015

The gospel lesson for this week is taken from the Book of John, chapter 20, verses 19 through 31. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”

“But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘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.’ 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 and said, ‘Peace be with you.’

Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray. Lord bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word today. Open our hearts and minds and empower us to see and respond to the resurrection of Jesus Christ in trust and confidence. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

After Jesus stepped out of that empty tomb early Sunday morning there were a number of resurrection appearances on that first day. If we knit together all four gospel accounts we can count at least five appearances Jesus made—to Mary Magdalene and the other women, to the two Emmaus road disciples, to Peter, and the 10 disciples in the upper room—with the exception of Thomas. Then on the next Sunday following Easter morning and after, the disciples plus Thomas saw Jesus again. Additionally, the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, eleven saw Jesus on a mountain in Galilee, 500 brethren saw him, James and all the apostles saw him and those who witnessed his ascension. There were many witnesses.

On the day Jesus rose from the dead the disciples were filled with fear. Mark’s gospel tells us they didn’t believe the resurrection had really happened, but some like the women and John believed. They were all shut-up in a room with the shades drawn and probably huddled together making sure to not make a peep.

They knew the Jews had intense bitterness, and they were hiding out thinking they might be next. In their terror they whispered quietly and listened for every voice and footstep that came near to the room. Suddenly Jesus appeared right in front of them and said, “Peace be with you.”

Jesus had a normal body, and he didn’t look like a ghost, yet he didn’t enter the room in the predictable way either. Somehow he was able to appear without

opening the door. He showed them his hands and his side as he stretched them out—evidence that the resurrection had taken place. Wow, this is really tangible evidence that Jesus has conquered death. He is absolutely alive! The disciples present had an immediate transformation from fear to courage!

If it were me, I would have felt bad about my unfaithfulness in the last few days. I was one of them who scattered and was afraid to show my face after Jesus was arrested. When I did show my face, I quickly ran off for fear they might recognize me as Jesus' friend.

I refused to admit that I even knew him, and I completely denied him. I didn't even show up at the cross and pray for him. I was afraid and discouraged and so filled with fear that the crucifixion even occurred. Even before Jesus appeared that first day I really didn't believe he'd resurrected. I was so terrified the Sanhedrin would come for me and the others.

But there he was, our Lord. He had conquered death! All of us were immediately transformed, and it was all we needed to be reassured that Jesus really was alive. Jesus came to us—the ones who had scattered and denied him. In spite of our many failures he still came to us and reassured us. We saw the wounds; they were evidence that the price for our salvation had truly been paid.

We all felt a deep sense of inner peace; it was a peace we'd *never* felt before. All the peace we'd ever need was standing right in front of us. The work of *this person*—Jesus the Christ—was the basis for the peace we felt and still feel today. Faithful are the wounds of our friend.

Now we had strength and assurance. Our fear was gone; it had all turned to joy because we finally knew that what Jesus had been telling us all along was true. He truly is the Son of God! And he commissioned us that very day just as he commissions you and me this day. In spite of our many failures, the Son of God

sent by God now is sending us. We all have the task of evangelizing the world. In spite of what we've done, what we will do, and who we are now, God's Son sends us into the world to speak about his word and to do his work. God's Son is now sending us to represent him.

And we don't lack power either! We have the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in our hearts. Our doubts are gone! Even the doubts of Thomas were gone. Oh sure, we all have ups and downs, but it's the power of the Holy Spirit living in us that continues to encourage us and move us forward. Our changed lives are the proof that Christ is alive. We are all living proof and are a united and corporate testimony that Christ rose from the dead that early morning!

Who are those who have believed without seeing Jesus? Most likely some were in John's community, but *we're* also included in that group! We haven't seen or touched the Lord's hands yet we believe and continue to believe! We're part of the story! So when you leave this place today, know that your life is part of the very transformation that affected the disciple's lives on the first day of that week that Jesus appeared to many.

Go, tell their story and tell yours! We're all characters in this one long narrative that has changed the world forever. In spite of our many failures, Jesus reaches out his nail scarred hands and invites us to get involved and to participate in God's continuing work of salvation. Take your part and be a blessing.

Let us pray. God of all creation, touch our lives today to move us forward and to take our part. Let's be part of the story and convey it to others. In spite of our many failures, remind us again Lord how very much you love us. Help us to embrace the power of your Spirit to become more and more engaged in salvations ongoing story. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.