

Second Sunday of Easter
Year B

Acts 4:32-35

Psalm 133

1 John 1:1 - 2:2

John 20:19-31

The Gospel lesson today offers many problems the early church faced. We are told that the initial incident reported happened on that same day, the day of the resurrection. We also know, from the earlier verses in this same chapter, that Mary Magdalene had been at the tomb, seen the risen Christ, and had reported that to the disciples. We know that Peter and the Beloved Disciple raced to the tomb to see this for themselves and, as recorded in verse 8 of this chapter, the Beloved Disciple believed. With this evidence, why were the disciples locked in a room, with all the doors and windows securely fastened?

We are told that they feared the Jewish leaders - likely fearing they would face the same death that Jesus faced. When He appeared in the midst of them, Jesus showed them His hands and His side, the marks of His crucifixion. At this, they rejoiced. Again, Jesus bade them peace and breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. In telling Thomas about this, they stated that they had seen Jesus. Why, then, were they still locked in that room a week later? They had not believed the testimony of Mary Magdalene, nor their own experience with Jesus. People claim Thomas doubted; what about the rest of them?

When Jesus appears again, there is no rebuke for Thomas, even as there had been no rebuke of the rest of the disciples. Jesus merely shows His hands and side again, as He had a week earlier to the others. While the others had called Jesus Lord, Thomas goes further and exclaims, "My Lord and My God!" He ties his faith back to the very beginning of this Gospel where, in the first chapter, Jesus is called God (the Word was with God, and the Word was God). Jesus calls on Thomas, and the rest of us, to replace our unbelieving with believing. This entire story is not about Thomas and his unbelieving, but about Jesus and the relationship He wants to have with all of us.

This is known to us by two actions Jesus takes in His interactions with the disciples. First, Jesus tells them they are no longer to be disciples, students who follow the master, but apostles, those sent out to do the work they have witnessed the Master doing. Even as God had sent Jesus, so now, Jesus is sending the disciples. The second thing Jesus does is to breathe the Holy Spirit upon them - the so called Pentecost of John. Jesus tells them they now have the power to forgive sins, just as He had that same power. Unlike the Pentecost recorded in Acts, this incident happened on the day of the resurrection and was not evidenced by a great outpouring of emotions.

We are the spiritual descendants of the apostles. The same relationship Jesus was creating with them in this story is now ours to claim. We are no longer called to sit at the feet of the Master, but to go and do the same work we have witnessed the Master doing. Even as Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, and welcomed all to come into contact with Him, we are to do the same.

We are also called, as we read in the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel, to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." That wasn't just for the first century church, but for us also. Therefore, let us follow Jesus' command and do likewise.