

Second Resurrection Appearance

After Lent and Holy Week, I took a few much-needed days to not think about anything. I got back Thursday afternoon and then with a wedding to prepare for and a couple of meetings for Waverly Aquatic Center fundraising, I've not got much for today. Mostly, I'll reflect on a couple of things in the text that struck me and then give you a little space of silence to reflect on some of the images from the story for yourself.

I'm going to start with this door. The disciples are behind a locked door, frightened that the Jewish religious authorities will send the Temple police after them. They're afraid of being crucified themselves for being a disciple of Jesus. They've heard Mary say, "I have seen the Lord." But that apparently hasn't done anything to alleviate their fears. Old Thomas gets an undeserved bad rap in this story, but the reality is, none of the disciples believed when all they had was Mary's word.

So, as a first question for reflection, let's go back to this locked door. Close your eyes and imagine yourself behind a locked door. What is on the other side of that door for you? Are there things that you are afraid of...things that keep you from living fully as a disciple and witness to Jesus? Things that keep you from the abundant life Jesus came to bring?

(silence)

So, the next thing that happens, is that Jesus is all of a sudden inside. This should bring to mind a couple of things from earlier in the gospel. Jesus talked about being the Good Shepherd, but he also said he was the gate for the sheep. He stood between his sheep and the dangers outside. In the garden when Jesus was arrested, he stood at the gate between the soldiers and police in front of him, and his disciples behind him in the garden.

So in one sense, Jesus in the doorway brings to mind that sense of safety...the sense that we don't need to be afraid of what's on the other side of the door.

So, in another brief silence, close your eyes and put yourself back behind that closed door.

Now imagine Jesus standing in the doorway. Hear him say, Peace be with you...and imagine a sense of peace come over you.

(Silence)

Jesus also said I am the way. So standing in that doorway, Jesus is also the way to something new. Jesus is the way to full, abundant life lived in relationship with God and all of God's

creation, including the prickly parts that you don't like...or that you're afraid of. Jesus is how you will walk through that door into the new life...the resurrected life.

But first, you need something else. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into his disciples, and he does the same for us. First, just a word about this breath. Our translation says Jesus breathed on them. But the word is the same that is used in Genesis 2 when God breathes life into the clay man. It's also the same word used in Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones – the winds came from God and life was breathed into the reconstituted bodies.

So, close your eyes again – pay attention to your breathing – with each breath in, imagine God's spirit filling your lungs and flowing into all your body

(Silence)

Now you're ready to walk through that door...to walk right into the world on the other side of that door...to face your fears, your insecurities, your anger and resentment, your unbelief...whatever it is that keeps you behind a locked door.

And to walk straight into eternal life...life which is lived in relationship with the triune God. But, notice also that when we breath, our breaths are all connected. You can't say, here this little patch of air is mine – you go get your own.

So again, close your eyes and imagine that breath – now imagine that air...that breath...connecting you to all the people in here...to the people out there in Davey...in Nebraska...in the US...in India and China and Ukraine and all the nations of the world.

(Silence)

We finish with prayer.

Risen Lord, you take us through the doorway that separates us from abundant life. Give us courage to step through that door and live as witnesses to your grace and love. Amen