

Easter 2C: April 28, 2019

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Acts 5:27-32 Peter tells the Sanhedrin that he must preach Jesus Christ

Psalm 118:14-29

Revelation 1:4-8 John announces 'peace to you', and describes the grandeur of Christ

John 20:19-31 Jesus addresses Thomas' doubts, sent them out, empowered them

The Sunday after Easter always re-visits the experience of the resurrected Jesus appearing to all of the disciples except Thomas. Thomas needed to personally see the marks of the nails before he could believe it was really Jesus the others had seen. And when Jesus returned one week later, Thomas was there, and saw, and said, "My Lord and my God!".

I loved learning through the years, from almost ever Bible commentary I have read, that Thomas got a bad rap by being named 'doubting Thomas'; he had a very understandable need to verify the quite unbelievable report that Jesus had come back to life.

Another dimension to this story that fascinates me is the transformation that happened to the disciples when Jesus made this visit. Before, they are afraid, in hiding, and clearly NOT planning out their strategy for spreading the news of Jesus' ministry. But Jesus appeared, breathed his Holy Spirit on them, and they all became much more than believers; they became passionate about their relationship with God.

Jesus was given new life, and he in turn gave new life to his disciples; and to all who follow. We live under a new authority. John said in his Gospel that through believing we have new life in the name of Jesus. This 'new life' is one that is our choice to live or not, and lots of us get too busy to remember about this other life that is in us.

I vividly remember a meeting I had a few years ago with a friend from AMP (which I left in 1996). We had always kept in touch, sharing Christmas cards, meeting a few times whenever he was on the West Coast. We were in the same department, and worked on lots of projects together. I went to his Lutheran Church with his family one weekend in Harrisburg, Pa. A few years ago he was out here to deliver an engineering paper, and so we met in San Ramon for dinner. We talked about AMP, about people we both know, about his church and about my church. He asked me my thoughts about our new ABC Justin Welby (at that time – in

2013). At the end of dinner I took him back to his hotel, and I gave him a nice peace-style hug goodbye.

When I got in my car I realized that this was my engineering friend; we shake hands, we don't hug. But I have become a hugger. When did that happen?

What does our new life in Christ realistically look like? How does it change our friendships? I realized that Jim was the ONLY person from my 15 years at AMP who I stayed in contact with. We seemed to have developed a timeless friendship. How many timeless friendships do we get in life? I think they are rare. What makes those relationships timeless?

Think about the relationships you have with people in this community. How do they compare, or how are they different, from the relationships you have with people not part of this community. How does the life we live as the people of St Luke's, the people who worship God together in this faith family, compare; how does this faith-life look different from the life you live with other groups?

Jesus did not just show himself to his followers and leave. He shared his Spirit with them; he shared his blessing of Peace with them; he stayed and taught among them for forty days; and he commissioned them to teach every nation what he had commanded them to do. The way Jesus used that time changed their lives; they began to see the world through God's eyes. We know this by the history of their ministry, by the letters they wrote that are now part of our Bible, by the impact across the world of the church they planted.

Jesus showed his closest friends in that locked room that he was resurrected, and the resurrected Jesus had work to do before his ascension. He had lives to change, so that those lives would then go out and change other lives.

How are we doing in the life-changing business?

How are we doing at seeing the world through God's eyes?

We need to live our lives under the truth that Jesus is risen; and that changes everything.

Amen.