



EASTER 2

APRIL 27, 2014

1ST, MARSHALL

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ACTS 2:14a, 22-32; PSALM 16; I PETER 1:3-9; JOHN 20:1-18

Doubting Thomas – a la Dr. Suess!

Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹Well,

1 They said at night it happened and it was very scary.
The door was locked, it was secure they *thought* from every worry.

2 So there they were in all their fear when, suddenly: they spied him.
They saw, then, Jesus in their midst – it truly terrified them!

3 In shock they asked, *How'd he get in? He's dead! What's Jesus here for?*
What with his wounded hands and side could he be in this room for?

4 We knew our guilt. We all felt bad. Love promised – and attesting.
But then we'd run, denied our part when soldiers came arresting.

5 We got out quick, we got out fast, so fast no one could catch ya.
This man, the Lord, the one we knew, they'd bound him tight, you betcha.

6 Then after that the time went slow, and in the night they tried him.
Peter stood around – alone; three times he would deny him.

7 Well, we **all** had gone a-hiding and we wondered what to do.
Our lives, our dreams were broken and our God seemed absent too.

8 This rabbi had washed each friend's feet
 as sent from God above...
 But death on a cross and suffering,
 Does that fit a God of love?

9 No, saviors aren't supposed to die, but save us with God's power.
 Least that is what I used to think before this strange encounter.

10 Gone was I the night he came, I can't recall my deeds.
 We had not trusted Mary's word, "*The Lord I've seen*," said she.

11 Impossible. Preposterous. How could she say such things?
 Her pain – makes her imagine. Her grief – it makes her cling.

12 And then he spoke, so they have said, "Peace to you my friends."
 They must have all looked terrified 'cause "Peace" he said again.

13 Amazed, remembered they his word the night before he died:
 God's peace he'd bring to us in life, our joy'd be multiplied.

14 Then the Lord commissioned them, those yellow-bellied ones –
 the ones who'd hid in fear and grief... so much like I had done.

15 He breathed on them the breath of life,
 to all his gave own role:
 to hurt with folks, to serve in need,
 face death to make life whole.

16 I missed it all, the word, his breath, his hands and wounded side, too.
 I thought that they were in denial, inventing things not true.

17 The group? They dream – like wisps of snow.
 I try to use my head.
Doubter? I'm not! I just want to **know**.
I need to know, I said.

18 I could not, did not trust them all in matters of such faith.
 I would not, could not trust...until my fingers touched each space.

19 But then a strange thing happened. Why, Jesus came once more.
 He stood there right before me, ne'er op'ning any door.

Yet,
 20 I saw no blame within his eyes, heard none upon his tongue.
 Nor halo, or oppressive light, just presence, wounds and love.

21 My knees they shook, my eyes were blurred.
Calm – I'd always been.
 Yet to his face I blurted out
 "My **Lord** and **God** – you're **ris'n!**"

22 He looked around and then he smiled
 and said direct to me,
*"Blessed are all who have **not** seen
 And yet still do believe!"*

23 This troubled world, it is our home, God's people, you and me.
 It's not forsaken in God's eyes, but blessed for ALL, you see!

¹ [Author: Dr. Jim Moiso (*with a few modifications*) Westminster Presbyterian Church, Portland, Oregon
 See Dr. Moiso's original at: http://westprespdx.org/public3/sermon/ala_dr_seuss_maybe
 Bible Text: John 20:19-31 ("a la Dr. Seuss, maybe")]

I love this Dr. Suess-ish version of the Doubting Thomas account – the author has done an amazing job of retelling the story in *rhyme* form.

Almost every important detail is included...except for two. **Can somebody name one/both of the important things that the “poet” left out of the biblical account?**

- 1) ²²*When he had said this, **he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”***
- 2) ²³***If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.***”

Here’s what I’m thinking: Jesus’ followers are hiding because they are ***scared to death*** – that **his** tormenters will soon be coming for **them**.

Scared to death: They’re hiding behind locked doors – to the rest of the world, they **are** dead, life-less, gone from sight, shut away in a tomb of sorts.

Scared to death: Do you suppose that Mary’s news of Jesus’ resurrection is ***purely good news*** for these friends, these disciples, these followers...all of whom abandoned Jesus just two days before in his hour of greatest need...?

What’s the first thing that a paramedic is supposed to do when they come upon a body? C.P.R. – cardio-pulmonary-resuscitation...

That’s what Jesus does, he **breathes** on them...and this isn’t something new. **Remember in the Old Testament story of creation from Genesis 2?** God forms a person from the dust of the ground, breathes into its nostrils the breath of life, and we became living beings...

So, too, here – Jesus breathes on the disciples *a breath of fresh air* – and they become spiritually alive. And with their birth-pains still fresh in their minds, he gives them an incredible power: the ability to forgive, or withhold forgiveness.

In a very real sense, Jesus is asking these people, who have just been forgiven everything, ***From whom will you withhold God's forgiveness?***

In the same way, Jesus seeks us out, finds where we are hiding – behind our own locked doors of fear and guilt. And then, with the gust of a mighty wind...or the softness of a baby's breath, Jesus breathes on us his breath of fresh air...and asks the same question of you and me: ***You, who have been forgiven everything...from whom shall you withhold God's forgiveness?***

Amen.