

Last week was about the miracle of Christ's bodily resurrection.

Today, a very ordinary, human, tender moment between Jesus and Thomas.
A moment every one of us will experience.

But first - this morning's psalm.

"I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel," says our psalmist this morning.
"My heart teaches me, night after night."

The LORD gives me counsel. My HEART teaches me.

The psalmist is telling us there's a connection between God and his heart.
Between God and his gut. Because he always keeps the Lord close in the
day, at night God shapes his judgement, his intuition, as he sleeps.

"Day after day after day, I set the Lord always before me," he says. "Night
after night after night, my heart teaches me."

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Thomas trusted in Jesus just like the Psalmist trusts in God. Thomas trusted
in Jesus when he told him he was the Son of God. He believed Jesus when
he said "the Father and I are one."

Thomas trusted in Jesus to shape his judgments, his intuition, his gut, his
heart...right up until Jesus was murdered.

The crucifixion separated Thomas from his Lord, from the one who shaped
his heart night after night. For 7 whole days Thomas started telling himself
new stories about who Jesus was. Safer stories. More realistic stories. His
heart and his gut began to look for a different counselor to trust.

But what turned Thomas' heart back to his Lord...was Jesus being in the
room with him.

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We live in an age of wonders. The things that we take for granted today would be seen by any of Jesus' disciples as miracles.

Yesterday I watched a basketball game that was being played 1200 miles away. While I watched my favorite team get beat like a drum I was scrolling on my phone at the ideas and images of people from all over the world, and if I had wanted to, while I was doing that I could have been talking about the game with my nephew in Puerto Rico, or with anyone anywhere in the world.

We live in an age of wonders. Communication, information, and distraction have never been easier to come by. Sharing with the world your thoughts on all kinds of people and situations has never been easier.

But what remains every bit as rare, every bit as important, every bit as precious - is physical closeness.

After the trauma of separation Thomas told himself new stories about who Jesus is and what he really was. Safer stories. More realistic stories. And then Jesus was there. With him. In the room. A real person.

Jesus offered for Thomas to touch his wounds but all Thomas had really needed was to be close to his Lord one more time.

And the psalmist says, "I have set the Lord always before me."

"Because he is at my right hand I shall not fall."

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Last week I asked you to reconnect with people you have written out of your life.

I asked you to try and see again the image of Christ in people you maybe forgot were made in his image, to respect the dignity not just of the people who think like you or who you think deserve your sympathy, but to respect the dignity even of those you believe aren't respecting the dignity of others.

I know it's a big ask. I've been working on it myself this week and I can't say I'm doing all that great.

But here's what I've noticed: it's a lot easier for me to see the image of Christ in somebody I'm sitting in a room with, than somebody I'm looking out my window at, or reading about on my phone. And it's a lot easier for me to respect somebody's God-given dignity when I'm talking WITH them face-to-face...than it is when I talking ABOUT them to somebody else.

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We've all got a little Thomas in us that way. At least I hope it isn't just me.

It's easy to make up stories about who someone is, about what they think or why they did what they did...when you don't have to be in the same room with them.

It might be the people who thinks differently from you politically. It might be the person in your family you're estranged from. It might be a person trapped for years in addiction. It might be a person who betrayed you who you wrote out of your life. And always, always, it's someone whose story you will never fully know.

Just to put my cards on the table, one of the places I struggle is with people stuck in poverty, with people who come only asking for money. Chronic poverty and middle class security puts a wall between us that's tough to climb over.

Your mind understands how this happens. The heart aches for them. But something holds back real connection. The dance between beggar and giver, between the one who has and the one who needs reduces us both, takes away from both the chance to see and believe in the inherent dignity of either of us.

Too many possibilities. Too many examples. I don't want who it might be for you. Maybe face to face for you this Easter means standing in front of a gravestone.

Easter miracles don't have to be supernatural. They could simply be following the example of Jesus and Thomas, and being together in a room, face-to-face, one more time. One more time.

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After the trauma of the crucifixion separated them, Thomas saw Jesus face-to-face, and when he did he dropped to his knees and said, "My Lord and my God!"

If you were to rediscover Christ in the person you had written out of your life, if you were to be in the room with the person you had long ago decided was not worthy of your respect, I wonder what you might say to them?

Amen.