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The Body of Christ

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“LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED; Believe in God, believe also in me.” What a watchword for this time! In the last two months we have gone from going about daily routines, to a National Emergency of a deadly infectious international Pandemic; Government Orders to isolate and shelter in place. We have watched as Seattle, Los Angeles, New York City, New Orleans were in crisis, but those metropolises are in crisis every Tuesday, Wed, and Thursday on NCIS, CSI and 911. Then, as America became so stir-crazy from being locked indoors with ourselves, our spouse, the cat, people went back to routines; just as Arizona, our County, our Zip Code, became a hot spot, and friends and loved ones became infected with the virus.

There was a family whose seven year old son developed a facial tick. The parents became extremely concerned and anxious as their child was diagnosed as having a very mild form of **Turrets Syndrome**. While initially only a repeated facial movement, the Mom tried more and more to control her child's behavior, which meant the child tried harder and harder, resulting in the boy uncontrollably blurting out “Whoops!” Compared with other things persons suffering with this disease could shout out, “Whoops” was mild, but all the more distressing to the Mom when at differing times in worship, as her son cried out. When the Minister read Genesis, where Eve took the Apple and gave some to her husband **Whoops**

When Jesus was baptized and the Heavens were ripped open as a dove descended **Whoops**

In our lifetime, “Mother” has meant a host of different things. **My Mom** married into the family after my older brothers and I were born. With a family of boys, we were amazed at the variety of casseroles she could make to stretch a few ingredients and fill us up. Mom knit and sewed, even taking tailoring classes; so when we got married we thought every child received a hand-made sweater every Christmas, and everyone had matching three piece suits every Easter. When we went to College, Mom went to work outside the home, but also volunteered delivering Meals on Wheels. Today, in addition to everything expected of Mothers, Moms are having to Home-School, as well as become Computer Internet technicians and Playmates. **Whoops**

While many of us have favorite verses in the Bible, the most frequently stated sentiment in the Bible is **“Peace, let not your hearts be troubled.”** “Believe in God” seems an appropriate thing to say, but the word here actually translates as **“Trust”**. Trust God, Trust Jesus, Trust Me, Trust in One Another, personally, I believe this to be the crux of faith. As we grow and mature and experience life, we find that everyone is not always trustworthy, all the time. Some people are intent on deception and stealing. However, the people we do trust, whom we need and want to trust, fail us. We must find ways to forgive our spouse, to forgive our children, to forgive our parents, to forgive our brothers and sisters, to forgive our neighbors, to forgive our Church, to forgive our pastors, to forgive our employers and company, to forgive our government, to forgive God, even to forgive ourselves. **Whoops**

We, each and all of us, have our **wounds, scars and baggage from passed experiences**. These make us cautious when trying to trust. A simple detail of the resurrection, that I find most important, is that the resurrected Jesus is not all healed, he still bares the wounds and scars and piercings of being crucified. Jesus did not suck up his suffering, or swallow his tears, but while still wounded, while those circumstance are not forgotten, they no longer matter as much. Death is not the final answer. **Whoops**

A wonderful part about Easter is that everyone does not have the exact same Resurrection Appearance. Conquering Sin and death, redeeming and reconciling Creation to God, would seem a fairly large accomplishment for anyone, but in addition the **Resurrection is personal and individual to each of us.** Jesus appeared to Mary who was weeping at her loss. Peter and the Disciple whom Jesus loved ran to the tomb and saw emptiness. Two were walking along the Road from Jerusalem toward Emmaus when Jesus explained everything to them. Ten of the Disciples were locked away in fear that night when Jesus appeared to them, saying "Peace, be not afraid." A week later, Eleven of them were together, and Jesus appeared to them again, having them touch and feel his wounds. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, when they had been fishing, Jesus ate with them, and spoke to Peter. **Whoops**

Oddly, this passage from John is not one of the Resurrection Appearances, but from the events of the Last Supper. More than the holy institution of the Sacrament, this has been a painful, **disastrous dinner party.** Jesus washing their feet as a servant is over. Jesus commanding them each with the 11th Commandment: "To love one another, because you have been loved" was said. Jesus praying to God, the Bread and Cup have been consecrated. Judas has been accused and left the Table. Peter's profession of faith and Jesus' challenge that before dawn Peter will deny him 3 times was said. You can all say it this time: **"Whoops"**

But then comes this difficult discussion. We have each had discussions like this, or we ought to. I had a good friend who was 94, he had served in WWII, he had a successful career, he and his wife had children and grandchildren, he had been a leader in the Church and Community, when suddenly it occurred to him he was going to die. What he said was "It had never occurred to him he would die, he had never feared death because he was too busy living, but now there was no denying the reality." **Whoops**

I love Jesus affirmation in verse 6, but not for the old exclusivist reasons. This statement from Jesus: "I am the way, the truth and the life, **No one comes to the Father, but by me**" was foundational to the Crusades. But for Judaism the way to God is The TORAH, the Laws of Moses. For Islam, the way to God is the Laws of Muhammed, the Koran. For Buddhism, the way to Perfection is Reincarnation. For Greek Philosophy the way to Perfection is through Enlightenment, subjugating the flesh to only exist in thought. Christianity is the only faith that describes a personal intimate relationship with God as "The Father" so the Only Way to the Father is through relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. **Whoops**

Many have interpreted that God must live in a great Mansion with many rooms. There is an old joke about people who die going to Heaven, and being shown all the many houses they could live in. Finally being told to be extremely quiet as they go passed the Presbyterians "because they think they are the only ones who get into heaven." The word in the Gospel of John actually translates as "**A Hostel**" a bed and supper, when you are on a long journey. Years ago, I hiked the Presidential Range of Mountains in New Hampshire, on the Appalachian Trail. One highlight was that after a daylong hike there was a hostel with fresh bread, a bowl of soup and a comfortable bed. The point being that Heaven may not be Mansions of Gold, but all our needs cared for, communion with God, forgiveness of one another, daily bread, a comfortable bed.

Thomas in the Gospel of John always comes across like **Eeyore** from Winnie the Pooh, always, a practical if pessimistic realist: **"We don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?"** This is where Jesus ties everything together with his "I AM" sayings from last Sunday. How can we find God, Eternal Life, You? The disciples were looking for **10 Commandments, 12 Steps, 7 Habits of the Heart**, but their answer lies in intimate, if confusing, challenging relationships of struggle, the first of which being with ourselves for who we are; the pre-eminent one, being with Jesus. By being a pessimistic realist, Thomas missed the point, he gave up and judged himself. Yet according to John, **Judgement is always diagnostic**, forward-looking rather than condemnation. Jesus calls Thomas to step into a different future, wholly dependent

upon God, on the love of Jesus not on following the rules. Jesus does not settle for Thomas' acceptance that he does not know, Jesus calls Thomas out: "I AM /GOD is the Way, the Truth, the Life" after this long together you know me. Thomas does not get to respond here. **Whoops**

We have had eight weeks of social distancing—during which closets and drawers have been sorted, bread and cookies baked, puzzles completed, we have gained our Corona pounds, but FAMILIARITY with one another, this time apart and alone, has not been a vacation or honeymoon, but only led to contempt for one another. People have looked for a miraculous answer from the Aging of two months, rather than sorting through all the needless stuff to see one another for who they are: our Life Partner, Soul Mate, Lover, Companion, the Mother or Father of our children. We have been panicked by the economy, terrified to be alone... LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED, TRUST we have more than shelter/we are in our homes, our comfortable beds, with plenty of bread and cookies to eat. TRUST GOD. Thomas does eventually see his relationship in order to Trust in the 28th verse of Chapter 20. Thomas is the only one in all the resurrection appearances with full confession of Jesus' identity: ***My LORD, My GOD!***