

Sermon for 7 April 2024 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Second Sunday of Easter

Scriptures: Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 133 (UM850); 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

Last Sunday we began the Easter season by the picture of the women who found the tomb empty and were terrified and ran away, saying nothing.

Today we read of warmth and trust in the first days of Easter. “Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”

Let that sink in.

There is an energy of love about church that we brush past, all too often.

There’s plenty else, as the Gospel goes on to remind us. Thomas doubted “unless I see his hands and his feet.” Even though he’d been the bravest and, when Jesus announced he was headed for death, responded, “Then let us go that we may die with him,” this is how he spoke when it actually happened.

There will come cheating and holding back later on, with needless pain resulting.

Time will pass, and doubt will divide the fellowship, and the apparent delay of Jesus’ return.

But let us drink deep this Sunday of the truth of being together, of being friends, of surviving by each other’s personal sacrifices for the good of the whole and of each other.

Last Sunday this part of our journey was quite literal. The Easter breakfast had its unique joy, with surprises and “how you’ve grown’s” and “look at them’s” and “come over here and let me hug you’s” ...

There is nothing like the “passing of the peace” each Sunday, just as the simple acts of contributing an offering and repeating the pledge and taking the bread and the cup ... just taking nourishment together gets it right as nothing else can.

Loving, and touching, and being together are our signs, our practice, this second Sunday of Easter. Like holding a newborn, or touching the elderly or anointing the sick, or so many other tangible reminders of creaturehood, we are to practice nearness and literal warmth as related beings, alive and belonging.

This will serve us well when other parts of discipleship come. Troubles are not the threat we are tempted to see them.

It is good and pleasant to dwell together. We are made to belong, and to sniff, and taste, and touch the delight of God's love for us, and through us, and in each one of us.

Welcome. Thanks be to God. This is the truth, the real thing, the promise we belong to.

Delight in this quality of being God's unique creations.

Even ... and particularly in this special week-end, when we literally experience the darkness and return to light tomorrow, with all its mysterious energies and stimuli ... celebrate, and claim, breathe and touch our belovedness as God's own. Share, and learn. Expand. All of us. Evermore.

Amen.