

Easter II Year B 2012

“Peace be with you; as the Father has sent me so I send you.”

My mother will be eighty in a couple of months...she's gotten to where she tells me things two or three times....but I'm fifty seven and starting to do that, so who am I to talk...Just the other day she told me that Jean Stephenson had died...for the second time (not that Jean died twice but that this was the second time my mother told me)...yeah, you told me I said....Jean was my father's first cousin....the Stephensons fell on hard times some years ago...and their family kind of splintered.... “but did I tell you about Charles”, my mother said...no, I don't think you did I said.... Charles was the older of the two Stephenson children...he's about three years older than I...for several years when the Stephenson children were young they lived just up the street from us with their father and his wife Jean's Parents, Byrd and Willie Farmer... Farmer my grandmother's maiden name....Mama in her early twenties had no children and would often go to visit the Stephensons and their extended family...and she took a particular interest in Charles, and he in her...he was very bright and creative at two years old...he loved for my mother to read to him, books usually read to older children...he couldn't get enough...most days of the week mama would go up the street and read to Charles...they had a special bond....after Charles years later graduated from nursing school he lived away from Dothan for most of his life and lost touch with us and his family and with Dothan in general until recently when he moved back to Dothan to tend to his mother.

Mama said that there were only a handful of folks at the funeral... most of my old friends are dead she said...but she spotted Charles, grown older, more weight, balding....she walked up to him and said Charles I'm so sorry about Jean....and he looked at her and said I'm sorry but I don't know who you are...they'd not seen each other in some 40 or more years....she said Charles, I'm Sam Flowers....at which point he burst into tears and took her by both hands...and said I remember you reading to me, and I've always loved you for that.

Recognition...that is what our gospel reading is about today. It is unfortunate that this passage has been dubbed the story of doubting Thomas, because you recall in the narrative earlier in the day, this day of resurrection, when the women told the other disciples of Jesus' resurrection they didn't believe them either....so all had doubts....if in your spiritual journey you don't have any doubts...come see me. Paul Tillich the great German

twentieth century theologian writes that doubt is essential to faith, because doubt leads to inquiry, and inquiry awakens the imagination to discovery... No, this is not a story about doubt, but one about recognition. Thomas' proclamation: "my Lord and my God" is a reiteration of what we heard in the prologue in the beginning of this gospel...that the son and God are one since the beginning....the one light of the world, and that that light is the light of humankind....In this passage Jesus reminds his disciples of their charge, that they are to be sent as he is sent, light of light....and he bestows upon them the holy Spirit, the very breath of God...in fact the word here for breathe is the same as the word for God's giving breath to Adam in Genesis in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of Hebrew scripture from which all the gospel writers draw)....so as Jesus is often referred to as the second Adam, the new human, then so are we, we the new humanity that will bring God's egalitarian commonweal on earth...It used to strike me as odd that in most if not all of the resurrection appearances in all the gospels the disciples at first don't recognize Jesus....but recognition is about discovery and it demands that we pay attention....It demands consciousness...and those things are the rudiments of ministry....but there's more...recognition literally means to know again...to know again something known before.... perhaps even knowledge deep in our DNA, knowledge from the source, the mysterious truth of which we are born, that we must experience, discover again and again...our imaginations feed on recognition, this mysterious re-knowing and therefore so do our very souls....perhaps that is why Charles burst into tears upon recognizing my mother and what she represented to him...perhaps that is why Thomas can only say in his experience of recognition, my Lord and my God.

We are being challenged in this gospel to go into the world and seek out and recognize the risen Christ among us....Thomas recognizes the risen Christ by placing his hand in the very mortal wound of Christ...my Lord and my God...brothers and sisters it is for us to place our hands into the wounds of our world and there we will recognize the one who was and is and is to come, we will recognize the risen Christ among the wounded of our world... we will know again that which is truth among us.

Hands are a powerful symbol...they have captivated artists over the centuries...just look at a Rembrandt, or a Caravaggio depicting this scene in the locked upper room...and notice where the light is...not on Jesus but on the hands of Thomas....those are our hands too....Hands the symbols of work and vocation, hands the symbols of artistry and creativity...they are the means of love and affection...there would be no music without hands. It is through the enlightened hands of humanity that God's light will enter the

world...and it is through enlightened touch that we ourselves will recognize the risen Christ with us...and know this, we will also recognize our true selves, recognize the beauty of who we are, and what we are born for...born to be sent into the world in love...born to heal the wounds of the broken, the crucified of our world and raise them to new life....To recognize the Christ there among the wounded: is to know again, recognizing again ourselves shining with the light of love.

In the beginning was the word...and the word was wounded...let us give our healing hands to the wounded word...and we will in a moment of recognition, that sacred mystery...in recognition we will declare amid tears of the joy that comes with knowing again the truth... “my Lord and my God.”