

Easter 2 Year A 2011

There's a popular saying among some Christians of the last several years and that is, I'm guessing you've heard it.....

“WWJD.” What would Jesus do? I don't spend much time wondering about what Jesus would do however I often wonder what it would be like if Jesus were walking among us as he did among his original disciples. What would his issues with us be? Would they be the same? Would they be different? What might he want to say to us or about us? I think at the very least it would be nice not to have to interpret what was recorded in scripture by others in another day, another culture, another time and place. Instead of hearing it through John or Paul, or Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or someone who wrote on their behalf, what if we could hear it from Jesus. If we could hear it from Jesus would our ears be open? Would our attention be focused and not averted?

And yet maybe we are enriched by not knowing exactly what Jesus would say. Perhaps the distance between Jesus day and our day is a good thing, a helpful thing. Writer G. K. Chesterton said, “In the main, and from the beginning of time,

mysticism has kept men sane. The thing that has driven them mad was logic.” Our religion, our belief in God, our belief in Jesus is at its best mysticism and it should never be mistaken for reason or logic or certainty. Religion is not about knowing in a scientific way. There is no scientific method, no blind study, no clinical trial that can prove or substantiate the existence of God or the belief in Jesus. Perhaps without the mystery our temptation would be to put Jesus in a box of rules and regulations?

The early Church had a difficult time communicating what the Resurrection of Jesus meant—just as we have a hard time verbalizing the reality of today’s story about Jesus appearing to his disciples. How do you put into words a completely different state of being, a wholly new mode of existence? How do you explain resurrection? How do you conceptualize a state of existence that is unparalleled, yet is identifiable with the old person?

How can Jesus at once *not* be a ghost, yet also not be somehow in the flesh? How could he be visible, but then invisible?

Material, yet immaterial? Within space and time, yet beyond it? How could he eat fish, yet walk through doors?

So when the disciples of Jesus encounter him on this morning of the first day of the week, they are simultaneously plunged into ecstasy and mystery—into hair-raising numinosity. No wonder the first words out of the mouth of Jesus are: “Peace be with you”. And with that it seems that the disciples are plunged into a sense of peace,the peace of God which passes all understanding. A peace which the world cannot presently give, nor ever ever take away. And then Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them. That breath of God, that reminder of how it is that we find our life.

Henri Nouwen said that perhaps the greatest challenge of the Gospel is not in putting into human language the Divine truth of Resurrection, but something more fundamentally human. It lies as he puts it, precisely in “*the invitation to accept a gift for which we can give nothing in return.*” In that room into which Jesus comes, the only thing the disciples have to give the Resurrected Lord in return is their acceptance of the gift. The acceptance of his peace.

Another way to understand what Jesus was saying to Thomas when he appeared to him is perhaps to understand how Jesus' words apply in our lives. What happens between Jesus and Thomas is meant to travel. It isn't meant just for Thomas but it was meant for us.

I'm sure you can remember a time in your life when you realized, all at once, that there was something you had been overlooking. Something that didn't make sense, but all of a sudden it made perfect sense, but in a new way. Some call these a hah moments and often they're about relationships or new ways of being in the world, ways that we have been living or could be living, ways that we have been relating to the world or could be relating to the world. If you can imagine the proverbial banging your head against a wall or knocking on a door that no one answers, and all of a sudden the wall disappears or the door opens and you wonder where it went, why it was there to begin with, and why it didn't disappear sooner. The a hah part of it comes when you are ready and perhaps willing to accept a gift for which you have nothing in return to give.

The free gift is love. Unconditional love. Love that asks for nothing in return. Love that comes from only one depth of being. It comes from God's being and it sees when we are ready to understand and so it comes. This is how Jesus appeared to his disciples, in a moment of extending peace, in a moment which they were able to understand. An ahah moment.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples the mystery of his resurrection was somehow understood not in a logical or reasonable way but in a way that surpasses understanding. At the heart of resurrection is mystery. At the heart of new life is mystery. At the heart of love is mystery. Easter invites us to dwell for a while in these mysteries, to dwell without logic or reason and to long for a moment of perception which surpasses understanding. May God find you and see that you are ready to receive this unconditional gift. Amen.

Excerpts taken from Synthesis