

Acts 5:27-32

27When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, 28saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." 29But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. 30The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

John 20:19-31

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." ²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Grace and peace to you from the risen Christ. Amen.

In 2011 Gabriel A. Radvansky and his team of researchers at Notre Dame published a study about the doorway effect - you know, the phenomenon of when go into the kitchen or down to the basement or to your co-workers office to do something, but as soon as you walk

through the doorway, as soon as you cross the threshold, you forget what you went in there for? Apparently it's not just that you're aging, tired, or overwhelmed, it's an actual phenomenon. *Has anyone heard of this study?*

What Radvansky and his colleagues discovered in their study wasn't simply that we forget because we entered a different room. There's something about passing through a doorway. Often when people in the study would pass through a doorway a few times and ultimately end up in the same room once again, they still couldn't remember. They concluded, therefore, that because our minds have a finite amount they can hold, walking through a doorway, crossing a threshold, often serves as a reset allowing our overwhelmed minds to let go of some information.

In our Gospel lesson for today, we find the disciples in a unique, in-between moment. The life they knew following Jesus is no longer - Jesus has died. They are on the cusp of whatever is next for them, yet they're drowning in grief and don't fully understand what it all means. They've heard stories about the empty tomb from Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, and Mary Magdalene has come to tell them she has seen the risen Lord.

But as today's story begins, most of the disciples haven't yet experienced the risen Christ for themselves and they've locked themselves in a room, afraid of the authorities who found Jesus to be threatening to their political power. The events of the past week, the one we now deem holy, have pushed the disciples across a threshold into new, unknown territory and for a short time, at least, their overwhelmed minds have forgotten who they are and who they follow.

The state we find the disciples in this morning makes me wonder if this same idea of doorway forgetfulness could apply to the bigger, more momentous doorways, or thresholds, of our lives. I wonder if sometimes, like the disciples, as we cross a threshold - whether it be an exciting, celebratory threshold, one riddled with grief and loss, or one that holds both - we sometimes struggle to remember who we are.

Who are you after your position has been cut, after that newborn baby is placed into your arms, after the funeral when the calls and texts begin to slow down or stop completely? z

The promise embedded in this story, however, is that Jesus never forgets who you are.

Jesus appears in the midst of the disciple's fearful hiding behind closed doors, breathes peace onto them, shows them who he is - wounds and all, and reminds them of who they are - beloved children of God. He reminds them and then commissions them back onto their mission to tell the story, to forgive, to liberate, to heal.

You, too, are a beloved child of God commissioned to tell the story, to forgive, to liberate, to heal. It is our privilege and our challenge, as a congregation, to walk with each other in the midst of these thresholds of life. And to remind each other of who we are, in case the thresholds cause us to forget.

Today, specifically, we have done this together as I became officially installed as your new Pastor for Care and Nurture. We have done this for Aila and Raymond - as we welcomed them into God's beloved community and heard God claim them in the promises of baptism. Later in our service we will do this for Pastor Jen as we send her on

her time of sabbatical rest and renewal, and for Pastors Tom and Erik as we welcome them to accompany us while she is away.

After worship, we commit ourselves once again to God's call as we celebrate the new solar array which is now producing ____% of our building's energy. Although I have never known this congregation without solar panels and was not around for the process of deciding to have them installed, in the midst of an environmental threshold where it is more and more painfully obvious that our climate cannot handle the consumption of fossil fuels that we've become accustomed to in our American culture, these solar panels testify to resurrection - a path of hope, of sustainability, of investment in our collective future. They, too, remind us of who we are - beloved children of God - and are a part of the way we tell the story of Christ's forgiving, liberating, and healing love in our larger community.

Whatever thresholds you're experiencing now, whatever thresholds may come your way, I pray this place, this community of faith, will ground you in the promise of our resurrected Christ - the promise that you are a child of God, sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ, forever.

Thanks be to God! Amen.