

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

April 24, 2022

First Reading; Acts 5: 27-32

Responsive Reading; Psalm 118: 14-29

Epistle Reading; Revelation 1: 4-8

Gospel Reading; John 20: 19-31

Sermon Title:

THERE IS A SUCKER BORN EVERY MINUTE

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; And Thomas said, "Not Me!"

Today is what the lectionary calls the 2nd Sunday of Easter.

Easter is too catastrophic to be covered in one day. This event not only changed the lives of the friends and followers of Jesus but it turned the human understanding of the world order on its ear.

The Christian lectionary includes 7 Sundays of Easter and also recognizes the Day of the Ascension and Pentecost.

In today's scripture readings Psalm 118 tells of the magnificence of God which is later revealed in Jesus. Acts tells of the panic of the religious authorities and the spread of the teaching of "The Way". And then Revelations predicts the coming universal recognition of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and as the one who will rule over all the Kingdoms of the world. This is bigger than anything to happen since the exodus from the Garden of Eden.

In Acts the authorities are so afraid of what was happening that they would not even refer to Jesus in what was going on. Instead of naming Jesus they say, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in THIS name?" Then they accidentally complimented the apostles by saying, "you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this Man's blood on us."

I guess they forgot that when calling for the crucifixion they said, "His blood be on us and on our children." Oops! (That was recorded in Matthew by the way.)

Any who!

And now we get to the beautiful human side of this story.
Thomas, Thomas, Thomas.

Thomas the disciple that will forever be known as Doubting Thomas.

Now granted Thomas asked a lot of questions. In the House of many mansions verse, Jesus says, “you know where I am going and you know the way.” To which Thomas said, “Master, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

I think someone once said that there are no stupid questions and Thomas was a definite believer in this. Thomas did not want to make a mistake so he asked that things be spelled out in detail for him.

Actually, Thomas did not ask to see anything that the other disciples had not already seen. In John we read, “When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”

One of the greatest fears of mankind is that they might be conned into believing something that is not true. “If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.”

Thomas had recently witnessed the terrible death of his friend and teacher. Thomas was devastated and he was not going to go through that hurt again. When his friends told him that Jesus was alive it sounded too good to be true. Thomas was not going to get his hopes up so he could be emotionally destroyed again. So, Thomas utters that famous phrase, “Unless I see the print of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the print of the nails and my hand into His side I will not believe.”

Can't you just hear the agony in his voice as he said these words? Then comes that all loving Jesus, the one that loved others so much He just went through the crucifixion for them. That beautiful man/God said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." Then comes the word that maybe Thomas should be known for, "My Lord and my God!"

Many people have looked at the next words said by Jesus to Thomas as a criticism but I do not believe that Jesus was criticizing Thomas, but rather I believe Jesus was predicting the very thing that would make it difficult for future generations to believe in Him.

If it sounds too good to be true it probably is. So many people throughout history have missed out on the joy of knowing Jesus Christ on a hug and hand shake basis because they are so afraid of being conned into getting their hopes up on something, they have not had the joy of seeing first hand.

Hear how this scripture ends. This was written just for you and me.

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that YOU may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Read it and weep. Weep for joy because this is true and real and done just for you. You are eternally alive in Christ, your friend and your savior!

Hallelujah and Amen!