

We Want To See Jesus

Yesterday I read again the story of Jesus appearance to Thomas. I could identify with the story as never before.

The story begins with the followers of Jesus "sheltering in place." They were afraid, isolated, and confused. Their leader had been lynched. They themselves had fled the scene. It seemed that all their hopes of the last three years had been dashed. And yet there was the rumor that Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalena. It couldn't be true, could it?

And then suddenly the Good Shepherd was there with them in their "lockdown." The one who had claimed to be the "door" of the sheepfold passed through the locked door to be with his sheep. But Thomas was not with them. Thomas was still afraid, isolated and confused.

Thomas knew that there was one thing that could resolve his fear, isolation and confusion. He wanted to see Jesus. Not a Jesus that was a disembodied spirit. But a Jesus with the nail prints in his hands and the wounds in his side. A Jesus that had experienced the very fear, isolation, and confusion that Thomas felt so intensely. A Jesus that had entered the worst hell of human experience. A Jesus that had overcome death with life.

We want to see Jesus

In some ways life has changed for Jeannie and I since we returned from a visit to Nicaragua on March 18. For one thing I (Joel) will no longer be traveling for the foreseeable future. And, yes, like everyone else we are being cautious and are concerned for family members that have lost employment. But in other ways life has not changed. I (Joel) was already accustomed to working virtually from my home. If anything, the virtual communication has multiplied!

Yet, in so many ways Jeannie and I realize that we are privileged. Yes, the impact of COVID has been devastating for many of us in North America, particularly for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. But we can only imagine the potential for damage from COVID as it



Jesus appears to his disciples

begins to peak in Latin America, Africa, and other parts of Asia. There are so many parts of the world where physical distancing is simply not a choice. People live in cramped quarters with extended family. For them there is no choice but to go out on the streets daily to earn money for the next meal. Social distancing is simply a privilege many do not share.

Like Thomas, we want to see Jesus! We want to see a Jesus with nail prints who understands our wounds and those of our world, particularly the most vulnerable. We want to see a Jesus who passes through the locked doors to speak his "peace" to a world in quarantine.

Staying at our posts waiting and praying

We cannot help but reflect on the coincidence between what we are experiencing and the Christian calendar. The word for Lent in Spanish has the same root as the word for quarantine (forty days). In a sense, our whole world has been passing through a Lent.

After his resurrection and ascension Jesus told his disciples to "wait and pray" for the promise of the Spirit. We wonder if that is our main task at present. Even as many things that were familiar to us are dying, where might the Spirit be birthing new life? How might the Spirit be inviting us into a hope that is deeper than the latest stock market report or COVID statistic? How might the Spirit be inviting you and I into a Pentecost community that transcends the divisions of language, culture and privilege?

There is one thing we have committed ourselves to as Resonate. We are committed to keeping mission workers at their posts, waiting and praying for the promise of the Spirit. For Jeannie and I that means daily contact with missionaries and local partners around the world even though we cannot travel to encourage them in person. It means staying in contact with the churches that support them and make their ministry possible.

It also means waiting and praying with each of you as you stay at your posts. This summer we are scheduled to visit churches in Colorado, Iowa and Michigan. We don't know at this point if that will be possible.

But we want you to know that we are already available to you virtually and will also be this summer, come what may. We would love to pray with your pastor or church staff, meet virtually with a small group from your church, or participate virtually in a church service. Maybe I (Joel) can even preach virtually if we can't physically be present!

This, friends, is the hour for the church to shine. The world needs to see Jesus!

Joel and Jeannie

PRAISE:

- That we are in good health.
- That modern technology allows us to see and hear each other even if we are physically distant.

PRAYER:

- For those most vulnerable to health and economic damage of COVID, both in North America and around the world.
- For those that have lost employment.



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