

“Believing and Creating: Acting on our Beliefs”
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John Knox Presbyterian Church – Indianapolis, Indiana
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John 20: 19-31

On Friday I convinced my wife of going to the movies with me. We were only able to find a very late showing to watch Avenger's End Game. Yes, I have to confess, I am a geek, I have been reading comics books since the early '80s, and I love Sci-fy and fantasy movies, so I was like a kid in a candy store.

Don't worry, I am not going to spoil the film for you in case you haven't seen the movie yet, but there was a part in a movie, a discussion (a conflict of sorts) between two of the main characters that stayed with me.

These heroes were in front of adversities of cosmic proportions, they were against impossible odds, and they reacted differently. One of the heroes, Iron Man was doubtful, for him it was "game over," and his conclusion was let's not even try! On the contrary and in facing the same odds and catastrophic events, the other hero, Captain America was capable of seeing hope and opportunity, and more important he was willing to act, to move to fight... even in the middle of uncertainty.

Uncertainty, not knowing what lies ahead is often a destructive force that brings confusion to our souls and often paralyzes us. As humans on our finitude, we often react in ways that yes allow us to survive, (trauma, pain, sorrow, loss) but in other times, our responses make things worse (like the ancient Japanese proverb "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" (3 monkeys). Our reactions and lack of responses (our inability) plainly and simply often limits our possibilities and moreover limits "God's possibilities" for our lives and the wellbeing of our congregations.

It is easier to hide, to hunker down when faced with adversity, with an uncertain present and future. It is easier to dig deeper trenches and to raise higher razor wire and to keep away... that that is threatening the status quo, that that confuses me, that that is unfamiliar... even though life is change - "Cambia todo cambia" sings the Spanish singer Mercedes Sosa.

The text read today shows us a similar moment. The Disciples, even though they had recently heard some stories about Jesus's resurrection, they were hiding from the Sanhedrin (Religious Jewish leaders), afraid that their turn could come next.

Uncertainty, fear, not knowing what is next... maybe they were close to the doors and windows listening fearfully in case somebody came close to them. They were fearful.. yes...

But, they were there. They could have scape as far as they could... The disciples could have scape and save themselves... but they were there.

And there they witnessed the resurrected Christ, they understood they were not alone; "Peace be to you" said to them that phrase means far more than: "May you be saved from trouble." It means: "May God give you every good thing."

Wow, could you imagine that?The Resurrected Christ arrived, changing that uncertain time, giving them: The Holy Spirit (advocate and a witness). Now they are equipped with what lies ahead, the resurrection of Christ through the Church,through the work of the church... New possibilities were reborn in the midst of not knowing what the present and future will bring to them.

But Thomas was not there; he missed this powerful experience. And for me, it is very reasonable that when he didn't believe the disciples as they shared their stories.

Think about it,he left the room and the disciples we defeated, trapped by fear. And know out of the blue, they were animated, with a different attitude.

I imagine Thomas' reaction... yeah, sure... whatever. Dudes... I went out to get coffee and doughnuts for everybody... when I left you were all like... We were all like Oh my God, why us? What's next? We were all crying and now... you all are like... Has he risen? Jesus is alive; we still have a lot to do!!!

You know what, I don't believe you..."Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

We know how the story concludes, and how Thomas was able also to experience an encounter with the Resurrected Christ.

And the question I have for us the church, here and today is what about us? What about us, as the Church?Do we believe, really believe because it seems we are we still waiting and asking for signs in order to act?

The world is crumbling, and our Nation is crumbling hatred against anybody who is different racism, income inequality is preached in and out by our politicians. Just in April, there were 30 mass shooting incidents have taken

place in the US. We are living uncertain times, and many like the hero from my story feel defeated. I know it is scary, especially if you are a minority.

It often seems the Church prefers to be hidden, to be entertained in their own programming, and stuff...

Actions and inactions (what we do) and what we say (our message) is equally important especially in the midst of uncertainty. . .

No wonder why more and more people are reacting towards the Church as Thomas did... Yeah right you preach about a resurrected Christ, but you act like you are dead. You talk about justice, but you are in cahoots with the oppressors. You believe in a loving God, but you preach hate against the people who are different.

Unless we see a Church that is willing to incarnate hope, justice and equality amidst our uncertainty... we will not believe."

As the church, we are called to create spaces in which amidst uncertainty, weary people could experience the RISEN CHRIST. We are called to be and to become the incarnation of the resurrected Christ here on earth... co-creating the realm of God.

How are our actions liberating people? How are our actions providing equality? Are we fighting for and creating new possibilities of abundant life?

And like the Novelist Anne Lamott once said: "Faith is a verb, not a noun?"