

HOMILY: See the Holy Spirit 04/11/2010
(I ain't afraid of no ghost)
Ted Takamura

God is good all the time! God is good all the time! God is good all the time!

Today's Gospel from John speaks of when some of the disciples were shut up in a room hiding from the authorities. They were afraid. Their leader has left them to fend for themselves. At this point the disciples did not know what to believe. Thomas was not with them up in the room.

Remember that last week's reading spoke of the tomb being empty. The Gospel stated that some of the disciples went to the tomb and it was empty. Peter looked into the tomb and did not see Jesus lying there. All they saw was the linens neatly folded up and the tomb was empty.

Reverend Jennifer spoke of these disciples going home after this event. But Thomas was probably not with them then either. To Thomas, he did not know what to think. He was afraid like Peter was who denied Jesus before the cock crowed three times. All Thomas knew was that he did not see Jesus any longer.

Later Thomas was with them and the other disciples tried to convince Thomas that Jesus was there and He is alive. This suggests that it was after Easter and Jesus had risen and returned. Thomas tells the others that, "Unless I see the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Seeing is believing...How many times do we think this thought? Unless I see this or that...unless I am present at the time of this miracle, I cannot believe. Jesus asks the disciples and us, "Have you believed because you have seen me?" The question to us is the same. Because we have not seen Jesus, we cannot believe. Where is our proof that Jesus is alive?

On Maundy Thursday Jesus tells His tells Peter, "Unless I wash your feet, you will have no part of me." Later Jesus tells them do you know what I have done for you?" Jesus is making them heirs to the Kingdom of God. But they did not understand.

We were not there at the foot washing on that Maundy Thursday...so are we not heirs of God's Kingdom? We sang "Were you there..." last week as well. Perhaps we were there in spirit.

It is not about lack of faith per se. Thomas was with them as one of the disciples. It was not that he did not know Jesus. But it was that he probably had not ever seen someone rise from the dead.

Unbelievable you say...How do you reconcile this issue? Have you ever seen anyone ever comeback for the dead? Mother said that my older sister having suffered for about

five years before she died went into a comma one day. My sister said that not only did she see the light, but she saw Jesus. But she did not remember what He looked like after they revived her.

We can go into a whole litany about what does it mean to be dead. In the Jewish tradition, and in many others, three days is to be sure that the person is dead. I will not go into the medical terms of death. It suffices to state that Jesus was in fact dead. The issue for Thomas is that he understood death.

Please remember that since Thomas was probably not present at Lazarus rising from the dead, that he had no way of understanding that this was a possibility. How would you react if someone that died came back to life? Jesus had told them that He would be back. But they did not understand what this meant.

We can sit here and ponder what is eternity and what does it mean to be alive forever. Or we can debate if in fact Jesus died. Perhaps we should get to the heart of the matter...What do we really believe? Oh...one might say. I believe this or that, but not... 1 Corinthians tells us that in the end, love is what is left of all the gifts.

What is important is that Thomas dared to question, "How can this be?" This man can raise himself from the dead? More importantly Jesus loved Thomas enough to answer the question. Yes. I did die. I am the risen Christ. I have come back from the dead. Thomas believed not just in the miracle, but in God's love just because.

Today we read Scripture as history which it is. But it is much more than that. It is God revealing Himself through years of pointing the way and telling us. "I am with you. I will always be with you." But we are in darkness and we do not see. Easter comes and goes and another year marches on. What has changed in my life? Is God present through the Holy Spirit? What is it that I believe?

Do we find ways to say to others I have been in the presence of God? What are the ways that we try to prove God? Do we find ways to allow the Holy Spirit to return once again during Easter and renew us and others because we believe? But beyond the miracle do we believe that God loves us. It is unconditional love. There are no qualifications, no tests to pass, no requirements.

Reverend Jennifer says to us that all are welcome at God's Table. You come as you are. There are no stipulations or things that you must do to change your ideas, beliefs, or your self. Just come. Come to God's table to see Jesus beside you, to comfort you, to console you, to love you. WOW! Me? Are you talking to me? I don't know...

God knows you. God hears you. God sees you. Do you see God?

AMEN