

April 19, 2020
Isaiah 40:6-8, 11, 21-31 & John 20:19-29
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No full sermon this morning, just a few quick reflections on the scripture texts as we settle into an opportunity within our worship to invite healing.

The text from Isaiah is a reminder (as if we needed the reminder), both of the fragility of life—we are the grass that eventually withers, and the flowers that eventually fade—AND of the constant care and companionship of God. God, the Creator of the ends of the earth and everything in between, who is like a shepherd, gathering lambs in their arms, carrying them in her bosom. God the divine sustainer within us, who does not grow faint or weary so that we might find our strength renewed, mounting up again with wings like eagles. So that we might walk and not be faint, run and not be weary.

The text from John is, of course, another of the classic post-Resurrection encounters between the risen Jesus and the disciples. First he appears to those gathered in the locked upper room, gathered in fear, to bring them peace. “Peace be with you,” he says, as so we say every Sunday to each other.

And then a week later he appears to Thomas, who had not been with the others for some reason, and so who has his doubts about the whole thing: “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.”

And again, from Jesus, “Peace be with you”—along with an invitation for Thomas to see and even touch his wounded hands and side. And then a reminder about the potential power and blessing of faith, to believe even when you don’t yet see for yourself. The faith, as we’ve considered over the past few weeks, which kicks off the whole, holy process—from faith to hope to love to life. New life.

But what I want to add here is that I think Thomas gets a bad wrap. From this story within Christian tradition, he gets singled out and stuck with the label, “The Doubter.” But the truth is that we, like Thomas and all the other disciples, like the women who left the tomb in last week’s account with “fear and great joy,” are all a mixed bag. We are all at any

given moment or on any given day or in any given season of our lives, or from one moment or day or season to the next, a mix of faith and doubt, of hope and despair, of love and fear.

“Do I contradict myself?” Walt Whitman wrote. “Very well, then, I contradict myself; I am large—I contain multitudes.” We are large and life is large.

We are complex and we are fragile. This is the reminder—like I said, as if you needed the reminder!

So we allow ourselves some grace, by divine order, as we continue—day by day, moment by moment, to live into the fullness of our lives. And living into the fullness and joy of life means living into the full range of human experience and emotion.

But today, in this moment, bringing all that we are and all that we carry, all that weighs so heavily on our minds and our bodies and our spirits this day, we gather as beloved community seeking healing. We see the woundedness all around us. We feel the woundedness within us, and we may find ourselves doubting whether new life is possible.

As Henri Nouwen reminds us, we are all wounded healers. And so, claiming here and now God’s holy and healing presence, we make some space for the possibility of healing and new life among and within us.

With that, I invite you to join me in the Litany for Healing.