

"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."

Most merciful God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may trust in our lives what we profess by our faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen!

Last week, Elizabeth reminisced about growing up with Merle Perkins and his television show, Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom. She remembers always feeling sad when the TV cameras would show a lion chasing down the slow runner in a herd of Gazelles. Why didn't the cameramen rescue the slow runner? Elizabeth, I wondered that as well.

I can identify with the slow runner, being one myself in so many ways. For example, I ran in a 10K last Saturday. Running is my way of trying to stay mobile at my advanced age. I finished the race in 1 hour, 9 minutes and 29 seconds. Let's just say, to put it mildly, that definitely puts me in the slow runner category. On the other hand, our own Justin Whittet won the race with an amazing time of 33 minutes, 58 seconds. Justin, are you here this morning? Take a bow.

I came in 53rd out of a total of 59 runners. Definitely a slow runner, but at least I wasn't "dead" (make the quote sign) last, no pun intended. And, guess what? There was a silver lining in it for me. In my age category, I came in first. That's right. There was only one other runner in my age group

but even if there had not been anyone else, I still would have taken the win because I've outlived most of the competition. Life is good!

But the more I got to thinking about it, I realized life is really a lot about the luck of the draw. Family heritage and upbringing, physical ability, we don't have much of a say in any of it. All we can do is make the best of it and remember to show justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. (Micah 6:8)

Which brings us to today's gospel reading. Being a doubter myself, I love this story of Thomas, how it's **always** read the Sunday after Easter and reminds us that even in the "glow of the resurrection," Jesus still honors our tough questions and even our skepticism. Rev. Rob Shearer from the United Church of Canada points out that it also reminds us that the wounds of Christ's trauma are still there in the resurrected body suggesting that without our wounds, there would be no resurrection. And I also love how Thomas's curiosity reveals a deep desire to know. One cautionary note from Rev. Shearer. . .He admonishes those of us in the church who lean towards a more progressive, liberal understanding of the divine mystery (and that would be us) to not enshrine our doubt as being somehow a badge of honor. Indeed, we should not forget that doubt and skepticism can get us stuck in a negativity that leads to nowhere. He believes, and so do I that we need to pivot from the word belief to the word trust. Belief is about the head, but trust is about the heart, trusting that love must have the final say in all that we do and say.

Especially in this crazy world we live in, where we are being called, now more than ever, to speak the truth in love to the powers that be.

Unfortunately, our President wrote unspeakable words on Easter Sunday threatening to destroy the entire civilization of Iran and mocking the Islamic faith of over 2 billion human beings.

In one obscene tirade, he vilified everything that we hold to be sacred.

When power justifies the destruction of civilian life, it becomes indistinguishable from the violence it claims to oppose.

We are told that there are differences—necessary differences—between those who wield power lawfully and those who do not. Laws, structures, and accountability are not meaningless. They are meant to restrain chaos and protect the vulnerable.

But there is a deeper question that refuses to go away: what happens when the outcome turns out to be the same?

When hospitals lose power, when children are buried beneath rubble, when families become collateral damage in the pursuit of victory—what name do we give that? (Pause) At what point does the language of necessity begin to sound like justification? At what point does strategy begin to erode the very moral ground it claims to defend?

The line we draw between “us” and “them,” between “legitimate force” and “terror,” begins to blur when civilian life is treated as expendable. Not theoretically. Not accidentally. But predictably.

The temptation of power is always the same: to believe that our cause is righteous enough to excuse what would otherwise be unthinkable. But once

we cross that threshold, we risk becoming what we oppose—not in name, but in practice.

The call, then, is not simply to win, but to remain human in the process. To remember that every life carries equal weight. To resist the quiet drift toward indifference.

Because in the end, the question is not only what we achieve—but who we become.

So, in closing how do we respond to the evil being promulgated in the public square? Parker Palmer suggests we find mercy. . .and we find it now! In a song by the same title he writes: “How can (some people) embrace a man whose Easter message to the world reads like it was written by a heavily armed psychopath?” But when Palmer wells up with righteous indignation, he remembers the song’s words, “every single one of us could use some mercy now. I know I don’t deserve it/But I need it anyhow.”

What does mercy look like in action? For Palmer, and for me, the answer to that question is a work in progress, but for him and me, “mercy does not involve cheap forgiveness for powerful people who are committing crimes against humanity, or for those who support them out of pure hatred for ‘the alien other.’ Instead, it is an opening of the heart that prepares the way for a civic community based on inclusion, and not a ‘new and improved’ version of an exclusionary cult.

So here’s the challenge. In the West, we’ve been taught, in one way or another, to build a self that can stand on its own:

- be certain
- be strong
- be right
- be successful

That's the early stage of what Maslow called *self-actualization*—becoming fully yourself and realizing your full potential.

But Maslow realized at the end of his life, some of the most fulfilled people he studied weren't focusing on themselves at all, they were more focused on service, not to earn brownie points but simply because they wanted others to know that they were not alone. They were marked with humility and quiet joy. ***They had gone from being me centered to being other centered*** realizing that the deepest human fulfillment isn't about strengthening the self—it's about **moving beyond it**.

The goal is not to become a self without wounds, but to become a self no longer afraid to be known in them and by them—showing mercy now because that's where the risen Christ still lives when he says to Thomas and to all of us, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe (and trust in me)." AMEN!