

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

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**Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen and Yet Believe John 20: 24-29**

In the evening of Easter, several disciples were huddled in a tightly locked room. They were afraid that the same authorities that had arrested Jesus might arrest them, too. After all, it was common knowledge that they had been Jesus' ardent followers.

According to the Gospel of John, to those frightened disciples Jesus appeared with the message, "Peace be with you."

The disciple named Thomas was not there. When he returned, they told him about their incredible experience. Thomas was not impressed. He said, "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."

One week later, they found themselves in the same room, and this time Thomas was among them. Jesus appeared to them again. The doubting Thomas was overwhelmed by the sheer reality and power of the resurrected Christ with the hole in his side and the nail marks on his palms.

At that, Thomas knelt down and uttered one of the most well known confessions in the Bible, "My Lord, and my God." Jesus gently told him, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

What do we make of this strange story?

To put it concisely, its purpose is to point out the truth that encountering the resurrected Jesus radically transforms human life.

Before Easter, the disciples were a group of frightened, desperate and confused people with nowhere to turn. But something drastic happened to them. They were changed from cowards to passionate messengers of Christ. The doubting Thomas became a courageous follower of Christ.

What transformed them was the utterly real, utterly unique realization that Jesus was not dead but alive; he was not gone but was with them.

The reality of Jesus' power of healing, his power of love, his power to create new communities of believers became more real to them than ever before after the crucifixion of their master.

Indeed, the disciples were convinced once and for all that what made human life truly human was not the magnificent power of the Roman Empire. Neither was it the religious authority of the high priest and the scholars of law nor any other splendor and glory of this world.

They realized that what made human life truly human was the divine love, compassion, and gentleness revealed most decisively by Jesus of Nazareth.

Now you and I do not have the disciples' first hand knowledge of the resurrected Jesus. We do not know whether we could have videotaped the resurrected Jesus or if it was an attempt to express in their everyday language something utterly unique that transcends human reasoning.

But that does not matter. Why? Because 2000 years after the resurrection of Jesus, we can say with confidence and truth that Jesus is walking our walk with us, fighting our fight for us, and giving us hope in the midst of darkness. Jesus is alive with us today.

His message is the same today as then. He is speaking to us today: "Peace be with you. Blessed are those who have not seen yet have come to believe."

Thanks be to God.