

se7en: Pride

Reconnect – April 12, 2009

Text: John 20:19-31; Romans 10:8-11

Key Thought: Pride disconnects and destroys, but Jesus offers the antidote: a connection with God that brings health, life and joy.

That evening, on the first day of the week, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. As he spoke, he held out his hands for them to see, and he showed them his side. They were filled with joy when they saw their Lord! ... One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side." Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. He said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven't seen me and believe anyway." Jesus' disciples saw him do many other miraculous signs besides the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life.

Pre-Intro: "You Found Me" (The Fray)

Intro: On a Journey Towards... Pride?

- We've been on a journey here at Reconnect over the past 40 days or so – the time that is called Lent, which just means "Spring" – a time that has been traditionally set aside to try to grow in your faith by giving up some things that aren't bad in themselves, but can distract from more important things
- And during that time, we've been going through the Seven Deadly Sins and the impact that they can have on our lives – we started with Sloth, and then went through Gluttony, Wrath, Lust, Greed, and then Envy last week – which leaves this morning to... Pride
- Why leave Pride until the very end? Because even though today pride is seen as something generally healthy for our self-esteem, through history pride was always seen as the worst of the Seven
- Pride got that ranking because while the other sins hurt you and the people around you, pride was the one that had the power to define your relationship, or lack of relationship, with God
- **Tomlin** defines pride as this:

At its root, pride is the desire to look down on everyone else, or to put it differently, the refusal to recognize and admit the presence, equality or even superiority of another being (39)

- And if you have a hard enough time thinking that any other PERSON has anything to teach you, then it's not a stretch to think that there's no need to have God in your life, either – there's no need for BELIEF
- This morning I'd like to take just a few minutes of your time to talk about that interaction between pride and belief
- But if that conversation is going to make any sense, I need a favour from each of you:

Belief means action:

- That favour is for us to agree on just one thing to start, and that is this: “belief means action”
- If we’re going to have a meaningful conversation about belief, we need to clarify a word that has been run over more than once in our culture, to restore it to where it should be
- Today when we talk about believing something, we describe a wide range of attitudes and ideas, most of which are pretty passive – “I believe that Obama is the president of the USA” – “I believe that I’ll go to Broadway’s for brunch today” – “I believe that if I eat as much chocolate as I did last Easter, that I will feel sick tomorrow” – “I believe that Victoria is the capital of B.C.”
- There’s no “price tag” for that kind of belief – no need to act on it, except perhaps to push away from the chocolate or book a reservation – but there’s no sort of life change that comes about as a result
- Some of what we might say we believe could be more filed under “Good wishes” or “Wishful thinking” than anything else: “I believe that no-one should have to go to bed hungry”
 - I say “Good Wishes” because these are things that no-one would disagree with – things that everyone with a beating heart could agree with – and yet, not everyone is working to help those who are hungry here and around the world, or even giving towards it
- Contrast these head beliefs or sentiment beliefs with a deeper “belief” – like what you might find in your value system, or whatever part of you guides you morally, whether you label it that or not
 - Lying, at least most of the time, is wrong
 - Hard work never hurt anyone
 - It’s good to try to save money
- And it might even be deeper than that: let’s put that word “belief” alongside our guiding principles: those ways of living, those determining factors that really go towards shaping who we are and how we live, that might have something in it like:
 - I’m going to do my very best to be honest
 - I’m going to be there for my family and friends
 - People are more important than stuff
 - I believe in doing my job right
- So when we use that word “belief” this morning from here on out, let’s pinky-egg-swear that we’re going to equate it with “guiding principles” rather than “things that I know are true, or that I should believe in, because otherwise, what would my family, friends and neighbours think of me?”

The Bible is a fan of “Belief”

- This idea of “Belief” seems very important to many of those who made contributions to the Bible – that our experience/understanding/interaction with God and what comes out of that should be put into our guiding principles and serve as part of the framework for our lives
- They talk about the need for “belief” again and again, and perhaps nowhere more than in this section, the biography of Jesus written by John, one of his closest followers
- John wants to inspire belief in God – to have people move their relationship with God, with Jesus, into the centre of their lives and living – and one of the ways he does that is to look at what gets in the way
- And that’s what I’d like to take a closer look at this morning:

Read Text: John 20:19-31 (go through it)

That evening, on the first day of the week, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. As he spoke, he held out his hands for them to see, and he showed them his side. They were filled with joy when they saw their Lord! ...

- It's the very first Easter Sunday – early that morning, there's been a reported sighting of Jesus, risen from the dead – but other than maybe Peter and John, no-one has really put a whole lot of stock in it
- After all, it was only on Friday that Jesus had been horribly tortured and executed just outside the city, after a procession through the winding streets – that was no secret – in a closely packed city like Jerusalem where they were, there were no secrets
- Today, the first day after the Sabbath, has been a whirlwind of rumours and chatter, with everyone having an opinion on what happened between Friday and this morning, but not much in the way of facts and evidence – heads are spinning and as his key followers, they don't know what to do
- Complicating matters more is that it's only been three days since Jesus was executed, and not quite four since the disciples ran away from his arrest – will they be next on the list of the Jewish leaders?
- And then, all of a sudden, there He is – even with the doors being locked, He has gotten in, somehow, miraculously
- “Peace be with you” – He promised that peace would come to them just that past Thursday night, as they walked through the park area known as Gethsemane – and here He is, telling them to have peace, be at peace, and to do their best not to freak out at the sight of him, back from the dead
- Imagine that you're there, and your emotions are all over the map, and then suddenly, the person you've been talking about all day is in the middle of the room – and you've never been so happy and yet so nervous in all your life to go and talk to him and see him
- He anticipates some of their questions – like, “But you're supposed to be dead!” – but lifting up his hands and his side for them to see – the kill marks are still there – the marks of the nails through his wrists, where the spear gouged his side – and yet, he is living, breathing in front of them
- And yes, they are freaking out happy over all of this, for sure

One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

- When I read this, the question that I immediately wonder is, “Well, where WAS he?”
- Where was Thomas? What was he doing? Everyone else is hunkered down in hiding, afraid of their shadows – but Thomas isn't there, isn't hiding, isn't... afraid? Or refuses to hide, perhaps?
- Because of this incident, Thomas has through history been known as “Doubting Thomas” – the one who wouldn't believe

- And yet, Thomas has been one of the most solid disciples up to this point – not flashy like Peter, and not the favourite like John, and not someone that seems to be continually writing, like Matthew – but he’s Steady Eddie, dependable to a fault, solid, someone that you would want in your corner, mature, doesn’t take any guff off of anyone
- If you do a Biblegateway.com search for Thomas, you find that he’s the one who is ready to die with Jesus when Jesus decides to head back towards the capital region, even though there are many there who want to kill him
- And really, he’s not asking a lot here – he’s just asking for the same experience that the other disciples had – remember, when Jesus had appeared to them, he showed them his wounds from the beginning
- But here’s the problem – Thomas is not prepared to believe what they’re saying – and the obstacle he demonstrates is one that we’ve all had at one time or another – his pride gets in the way
- Why would Jesus appear to all the rest of them and not him? Especially with Thomas’ track record?
- And why would he want to take the word of a bunch of fraidy cats who have been hiding ever since what happened, when he’s been trying to get on with his life?
- Maybe the point he’s at is where he says, “It’s been a good run, fellas, and we’ve had a good time, but we have to grow up sometime and realize that this is not what we thought it was going to be” – it’s over, and we have to come to grips with that – be sensible – move on

Pride versus belief:

- That was HIS version – but there are a lot more of them out there, and maybe some that we can identify with this morning – roadblocks in the way of belief
- Maybe you suffered a tragedy – something terrible happened, something that should have never happened, something that just doesn’t happen to other people
 - That’s the Fray song that played just before I got up – “lost and insecure, you found me” – but where were you BEFORE?
 - And if you feel that God screwed up, then why should you ever put Him in a place of power in your life? Why would you ever give Him that place? Better that YOU be in charge, than Him...
- Maybe your obstacle is apathy – in the sense that life is so busy, you’re just trying to keep your head above water, love your family and do the best you can – and you figure that you’re not doing too bad a job – why should you need that kind of help? OR that kind of mystery? At least you’ve got a handle on what’s going on right now...
- Maybe your roadblock is intellectual – you just can’t believe that this kind of thing could ever happen – there’s too much evil in the world, science can explain the things that faith wants to sweep under the carpet – and you’re just not one of those “believing” people, who can shut their eyes, hold their noses, and believe... a la House...
- Or maybe your obstacle is just simply, that belief would lead to action, and the sort of action that would force a change in your life
- Each of these options, one way or another, is pride – and that pride keeps you and I from the life that we could have
- **III: Laptop battery and power charger** – the closer to life you get, the more you have to end yourself

Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!” “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven’t seen me and believe anyway.”

- It’s now the following Monday night – after eight days of hearing about it, Thomas decides to get together with the rest of the disciples, “just in case”
- And it’s a repeat of what happened the first time – Jesus miraculously appears among them, tells them to relax, and then speaks directly to Thomas
- How does He speak to him? Is it reproachful? Hurt tones? Is He upset? Angry, even?
- I don’t think so – because Jesus welcomes belief, and He’s been waiting for eight days to reveal Himself to Thomas, his close friend and companion over the last three years – I think it’s more even with a touch of humour, because serious, common-sense Thomas, whose eyes are now bugging out of his head, doesn’t know what to do
- Maybe God has chosen Thomas for this role, this place in the great story – to be the one to illustrate the lesson that Jesus wants to get across to all of them – because he knew that he could take it
- Because Jesus is speaking not only to Thomas, but really to all of them – after all, why are they still meeting behind locked doors? Clearly there is still some translating from belief to action to take place!
- What does Jesus say to Thomas? “Don’t be faithless any longer – believe!”
- Give up your objections, give up your pride, your need to be different than the others, special, unique, and believe – move past it into action
- And Thomas did – tradition tells us that when the disciples fanned out all over the known world to spread the message of the love of Jesus, that he made it as far as India – and started churches there, before he would be killed for his faith – his belief led to action

Jesus’ disciples saw him do many other miraculous signs besides the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life.

- Arguments for the existence of God: Anselms, cosmological, teleological, moral, religious, anthropic, argument from testimony, from history, etc. (Wiki list)
- But none of the arguments out there or how bearded the scholar is matter if you’re not ready to put that into the guiding principles section – otherwise, it’s just observation, it’s just window dressing
- And then you have to ask yourself, along with Thomas: what are your criteria for belief? What will take something out of the “curiosity” file in your mind/heart and put it into something more settled?
- Thomas was looking for nail wounds and spear holes – what are your criteria? Or has it been a long time since you thought about that kind of thing?

Key Thought:

Pride disconnects and destroys, but Jesus offers the antidote: a connection with God that brings health, life and joy.

...the Scriptures say, “The message is close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart.” For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “anyone who believes in him will not be disappointed.” (Romans 10:8-11, NLT)

Conclusion: Something worth believing:

- The sacrifice of Jesus: “I just can’t get it out of my mind” (Hope)
- Jesus overcomes our pride with His humility – as God, he humbles himself, serves and dies – we can overcome our own pride through confession (including the kind that leads to belief), service
- **“I believe that God loves me more than I will ever know, and that having Him in charge of my life, rather than limiting me, actually sets me free”**
- Alan Mann, in his book [Atonement For A Sinless Society](#):

“This is the ‘sin’ that pervades our ‘sinless’ society: ‘our determined effort to live our lives as if God were not the author of our lives’. The result is an inevitable dysfunction in all of our relationships.” (166)

- Where is all the evidence pointing in your life? And who’s in charge? And how is a lack of someone other than yourself in charge hurting you and those you love?
- Tomlin says,

“[Getting past pride] means stepping down from my throne and admitting that I need other people and that others’ claims are as important as my own. But of course if I do that, it leaves an empty throne in my heart and soul, and it is vital to decide well what should fill that throne. Filling it with another person, a passion for skiing, a football team or a career ambition is just not worth it. That throne is made only for our Creator, and only when he begins to take that place do we truly start to discover the deep wisdom of God in how to live” (Tomlin 54)

Response: True Love (band)

Post-Response: What now?