

St. Andrew's Sermons
The Rev. John D. Rohrs
2 Easter A; May 1, 2010
Gospel: John 20:19-31

Reaching for God

British poet Robert Browning once wrote that “a man’s reach should always exceed his grasp.” It’s an inspiring verse, meant to celebrate the courage and imagination of the human spirit, but unfortunately it’s playing out a bit differently in our house. You see, Thomas, one of our twin boys, has been out of sorts lately. He’s been unusually fussy during the day and waking up a lot at night. At first, we thought he was sick or maybe cutting some teeth, but the other day we finally figured it out. The problem is that he is desperate to be mobile.

You can see it in his eyes. He’ll spot something across the room and you can tell that he’s dying to grab it, feel it, eat it. He gets so worked up that eventually he just hurls his body in that direction, but of course he can’t crawl yet so he ends up on his stomach, flopping around like a cockroach and screaming these awful cries of defeat and frustration. Poor guy, he’s so tired of just watching life go by; he’s wants so badly to get in there and experience it first-hand.

I can’t blame him. In fact, I’m proud of him. He’s following the example of his namesake – Thomas the disciple. We heard the story again this morning, and I’ll tell you, I think Thomas gets a bad rap. When you hear today’s gospel, what you think of? Doubting Thomas. Doesn’t have enough faith to believe. Has to see Jesus and put his hands in his sides.

Well in his defense, Thomas just wants the same proof as the other disciples. They got to see Jesus the week before; why wouldn’t Thomas want the same? Think about it, he was heartbroken. He’d seen his friend and Lord killed. So his doubt, if that’s even the word for it, just shows how deeply he cares and wants to believe.

Thomas doesn’t just want to take his friends’ word for it; he wants to see Jesus for himself. If this news is true, if Jesus has really risen from the dead, Thomas wants to touch him, embrace him, and let the joy of this moment fill his heart. And indeed it does. As soon as he touches Jesus, Thomas exclaims with great conviction: “My Lord and My God!”

If it’s not clear by now, I like Thomas. In fact, the question he raises for me is not how we can avoid repeating his behavior but rather how can we follow it? How

can we feed that curiosity, that desire to see and know the risen Christ? How can we strive to touch, to taste, to experience the good news of the resurrection? Because the thing is, it's not as easy for us. Jesus doesn't show up in our living room. We aren't witnesses to his resurrection in the same way, but we are witnesses of what several writers have called ordinary resurrections – every day moments that point to new life and hope.

Now these could be private moments like a friendship restored, or an addiction overcome. Or they could be big, communal moments: moments of joy like a peaceful revolution or a royal wedding; or moments of courage in the midst of suffering, like people coming together to rebuild after a devastating tornado.

Whenever they come, and whatever shape they take, these moments are examples of the human spirit reaching upward, longing for new life. Undoubtedly, in such moments our reach exceeds our grasp. We never quite touch heaven. But that's okay, because the meaning and miracle of Easter is that God reaches eternally toward us, bridging the gap beyond our grasp and embracing us with an everlasting love. That is the good news of the resurrection, and it is always worth seeing for ourselves. Amen.