

SERMON- Easter 2 (A)

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Acts 2:14a,22-32

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

St. Timothy's (Herndon)

April 16, 2023

Psalm 16

OPENING:

Thomas said to them, "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."

Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side."

My favorite class at Seminary, this won't surprise you, was Church History, because history is my first love and because you get to hear the stories of all the sinners and saints from our church's past. My least favorite classes in Seminary were Ethics and Theology, by the way, because they were too abstract, too impractical, too out there.

I loved Scripture too at Seminary because there you really get to hear stories like these. We have a Bible, full of these stories, strange and wonderful and compelling and powerful and weird and uncomfortable.

We have a history as a Church (big c and lower case c) full of the same things, and we need to tell it to our children, tell it to the world. We have to get ourselves out of the locked room and tell it.

The early church told it, the medieval church told it...

these stories about Jesus in the locked room and the disciples and Thomas and the wounds in his side.

In the modern world, however, we demand a rational explanation.

We try to fit it into OUR worldview, where it then starts to slip away

We try to force that story to fit into our rationality,

"The result... is an eerie silence.

The music has stopped, and the stories are being forgotten."

To that, we, the Church, we St. Timothy's, should say "NO" and instead we have to tell these stories to each other and to an unbelieving world, tell it to our children, tell it to those who don't know the words, or those who have never heard it.¹

¹ Culpepper Alan R. 2007. *Mark*. Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 65-66/

EASTER 2

Today, We have another baptism today at the 10 am hour where we have to tell the story and we have to believe it to be true.

Today is typically a “Low Sunday” and so today is a weird day to stress that point... although you could argue that St. Tim’s does not know such a thing as a “Low Sunday”, today we have a baptism, we have a commissioning for our group going to Lakota Mission.

This week, I did want to give myself a little bit of a break and so, if you came by, you would have found me sitting on the floor of the narthex with all the boxes of our church archives strewn all over with me pouring over them (“working hard or hardly working”). I also visited the Rundlett family, and then Sandy Schanne took me on a tour of downtown Herndon where she grew up at the “old church”, and then this week I go to visit the Father Bayfield and Anne Crocker at Westminster Canterbury. All this an Easter present to myself!

In those documents, are strange stories, amazing stories, boring stories, and every thing in between.

There are also entries into the ledger which make you turn away, the early entries included the job title or whether they were “Coloured” (in the language of the day), where the church would baptize the field hands, and domestic servants in the postwar period but indicated their status. There are baptisms of folks who died too young, and much more.

We might want to turn away but, Against that, Jesus says “put your finger in my side, feel my wounds.” We don’t get the Jesus we want, we don’t get the God that we could come up with in our brains.

Instead, we get Jesus... sneaking into our hearts and minds and the locked rooms of our hearts, showing up and saying: “I am here, Can you bear it? Can you stand it? Can you look at me? Can you reach out and touch me?”

BAPTISM:

So this week, in terms of our stories, I have the “key” to them, a “key” to the locked room, that we can unlock who we are and share it with the world.

This is a key (these are my props to the Children’s sermon later today) to the Archival cabinets in the Narthex where St. Timothy’s historical documents are held.

To get that key, you have to get THIS key, which opens up the key box in the volunteer office.

To open up the volunteer office, you need to have this key.

To get to the volunteer office, you need to have this key which opens up the outer office.

AND to get to the outer office, you need this key, which opens up the front door.

How many keys is that? 5!

Why are there so many keys to find out who we are, because it's important, it's a treasure, it's worth it!

Today we celebrate a baptism, the continuation of St. Timothy's long history. We did a couple last week, and we have another one next month. (This is the COVID bump from all those we lost during that time period.) Once we stop baptizing folks, that is when our history will end.

I looked through all these books this week, and I estimate that this is about the 1500th Baptism here at St. Timothy's

I calculated that based on this (more props!), this is the 7th book of baptisms here at St. Tim's, the section is about ½ full, we will use it for another few years, Layden Rose and Samantha Rachel are here, and *many of you*.

It's safe to say wherever you got baptized, there are undoubtedly big, dusty books like this, that they keep locked up, treasured.

Before that we had Registry book #6: ran for about 20 years, roughly Father Brad Rundlett's tenure here: 20 pages, about 400 baptisms.

Book #5: again about 20 pages, 20 years: Father Ralph's tenure: another 400 baptisms.

It's a marvelous thing to pore over those names, sometimes they will catch my eye, most of the time not. Who are these people? What are they doing in this world? Did it stick? Their baptism? What room are they in now? Are they cowering in fear somewhere? Or are they proclaiming the Easter message somewhere?

Book #4: John Henry, another 400 baptisms, it gets a little tougher to read, handwriting is a little more florid, eventually we are at the old church.

Book #3: This has priests I have never heard of, baptizing folks, but all in the name "of the father and the son and the holy spirit." Herndon was a map dot, a train stop, a little farm town blip on the map. The names are even more obscure.

Who cares? Why does it matter? Why keep the records?

Because you cannot get baptized in your own brain, you cannot baptize yourself, it's not a feeling, it's not a state of mind, It's a living breathing reality with water and babies and gowns and hymns and no air conditioning with churches bursting with people OR with no one there but God to hear.

Let me hear you cry, let me hold you. Let me walk you down the aisle to the adoring masses, let me hear you babble during the sermon that's going on too long.

I know you are dying to know what is up with books #1 and #2, they are here somewhere in the church, I am sure someone will tell me after, give me something to do next week during my down time. They are also located in the Virginia Room of the Fairfax County Library, I went there a few months ago. To see them, you have to give up your driver's license and they hold it from you, and they give you special white gloves.

That first books tells you the very first Baptism at St. Timothy's. He was a young man, 11 years old, named William Henry Van Der Mark. December 22, 1872. Who was he? What did he grow up to be? How did priest let him get baptized 2 days before Christmas Eve? Did he ever get confirmed, did he ever get commissioned?

Was he a saint, was he a sinner? The record is limited, we do know he was a Yankee from New York State, so chances are it's the latter! He was baptized not even in the old church but in the 1st building, the Old cheese factory, talk about sweat and dirt and the reality of this broken world.

CONCLUSION

Harrison, you bookend the first, William Henry Van Der Mark now, you are #1500, give or take a few. You will add to that history, you might even improve upon it. You are uniquely entirely yourself, special in God's eyes, and remarkably made. But you will be baptized by that old formula "in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit," just like the 1499 before you.

Harrison Lewis, you are not perfect, you are not an angel, you are better than that, you are human, you are a child of God, you are a part of your family and a part of this community and thus a part of God's family. Your name is written with ink into this book, that we guard under lock and key, because that's how important about it

I have a whole another sermon about this font, but we gotta get going with the baptism, but I will let it have the last word: “holy holy holy” it says on one side and the “dead yet speaketh.” They cry out that we get to join the great cloud of witnesses. Who’s that over yonder all dressed in white, must be the Children of the Israelites. Real people, flesh and blood, **AMEN**