

# Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections based on this week's lectionary readings

April 27, 2014

Second Sunday of Easter, Year A

The readings this week:

- Acts 2:14a, 22-32 ◦ Psalm 16
- 1 Peter 1:3-9 ◦ John 20:19-31

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

## Is It Really You?

The sign in the shop says, "Nice to look at, lovely to hold, but if you break it, consider it SOLD"



Understandable I suppose. Which is why my childhood memories of going into stores are underscored by my Mother's mantra, "Look don't touch!". Yet we are tactile beings. The very first sensations we have as humans involve touch and then of course putting the held object into our mouths! What a consternation causer for young mothers.

Thomas wasn't a doubter he was simply human. "Don't tell me, show me." After all, didn't the Psalmist say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him." Psalm 34:8

I am reminded of the countless movie scenes where a long-lost-thought-dead loved one returns. The director usually has the other character hold the returner's face in their hands and say something like, "Is it really you?"

Despite the risk of touching instead of just looking, despite my Mother's nagging voice, I am a Thomas too.

Like him I have had moments of loss, confusion and chaos when I have shut down and denied the possibility and probability of any return from the dark desperate void of my own broken grief. My heart has shut down as securely as the locked doors of that upper room on that first Easter evening.

I am never sure how, or why, Jesus has come to me and stood in that sequestered place of fear and forgetfulness, but he has again and again. He is miraculously there despite my barricades and belligerence that often make Thomas sound tame.

He is there, and all I want to do is what the movies characters do. I want to hold his face in my hand and sob, "Is it really you?"

I never do that though. Perhaps it's my Mother's voice, "Look don't touch"? I don't think so. Rather I believe it is the overwhelming experience of real resurrection renewal that makes me not hold him nor poke fingers of incredulous questioning into him.

In moments of resurrection encounter I like Thomas, can do nothing other, than fall on my knees before his patient ever-returning grace.

"My Lord and my God!"

Peter Woods, *The Listening Hermit*



Indeed, in the gospels, doubt and disbelief are important to the Easter experience, and Jesus

does not condemn his disciples for them. So, if we want to experience the resurrection, I suggest that we not simply celebrate it or find joy and hope in it. We must doubt it, too. We must admit our disbelief.

~ Rachel Held Evans

# Reflecting on the Word



## 1st Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22-32

What parts of the life of the early Christians do you find yourself living as a Christian today? How do you do this? In what ways would you like to be more like the early Christians? How can you make efforts to do this? One sure sign of their unity was that the early Christians shared what they had with those who had less. How will you try to follow this example? [Proclaiming Faith](#)

## Psalm Reading: Psalm 16

In what areas of your life do you struggle for balance? According to this passage, what has the Lord done for David? What body imagery does David use to describe his relationship with God? Describe the spirit of David's comments about the land in verses 5-6. What is the significance of the Lord's being at David's right hand? Look back through the entire passage. What is important to people who follow God? How do those values contrast with worldly values? In what specific ways do you need to bring your values in line with God's values? What would help you to do that? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)



"According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is

*imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...*" 1 Peter 1:3-4

## Praying Toward Sunday

Lord, help me to create a balanced life.  
Help me to take time to enjoy life,  
to be a person full of gratitude.  
Help me take time to love,  
to extend my hand in service to those around me.  
Lord, remind me to take time to learn,  
to be disciplined and accountable.  
Help me to make a difference in the  
small and big moments of my life.  
Lord, help me to keep smiling,  
to be happy, and to try to be myself.  
Lord, infuse me with your spirit  
so I can create a life of balance,  
moderation, and simplicity.  
And whatever my challenge,  
let it be an occasion to deepen my life's purpose.

Susan Burke '87 M.B.A. , [Faith ND](#)

## Balancing Act

Balance. Between being too busy or not-busy enough. Between being hungry or overeating. Between giving and burning out. Between taking risks and apathy. Balance is something we all strive for and long for, yet it so often feels beyond our reach. Perhaps David felt the same way, and perhaps in his searching and seeking the Lord, he found the place of perfect balance and 'just enough.' "*The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places...*" Psalm 16 is a lesson to learn from; if we take refuge in him, he WILL give us counsel. In that, there will be perfect balance. "*In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*"

*My great hope is to laugh as much as I cry; to get my work done and try to love somebody and have the courage to accept the love in return. ~ Maya Angelou*

## 3rd Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

If you knew you were about to enter a difficult set of circumstances that would test your faith, how would you prepare yourself? How does Peter's description of his audience help explain why they were "strangers in the world"? Peter says in verse 6, "Now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials." If you were to hear that kind of message, what information in this paragraph might help you through the suffering? What did Peter believe to be true of genuine faith? How does the future, as Peter describes it here, offer you hope in your own setting? When have you seen Jesus (through a person or event) in a way that increased your faith? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

## 4th Reading: John 20:19-31

When Jesus appears to his disciples, what specific gifts and promises does he give them? Finally, Jesus appears to Thomas. How does Thomas's attitude—both before and after Jesus appears to him—add credibility to the resurrection? What do you learn from Jesus' encounter with Thomas about dealing with people who have doubts about Christianity? Who could you help to understand and believe the claims of Christ? John tells us why he has written his Gospel in verses 30-31. Of all the "miraculous signs" John has included, which have been most convincing to you? Why? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)