

Sermon 2012 Easter 3
April 22, 2012
Text: Luke 24:36-49
Theme: "CLOSED MIND – CLOSED TOMB"

Before she became a Lutheran, Dänya was very religious, but it was a different kind of religion made up of 1 part Roman Catholicism, 1 part Discovery Channel and 2 parts random stuff that Dänya heard from others or just made up for herself. So while she was very religious. Her religion was not well anchored and floated off into many strange rules and rites that served no particular purpose. The thing she found in Lutheranism, which many people find, was the anchor. She loved that there was a reason Lutherans believed what they believed.

Now, in her life as a pastor's wife, she has learned that many Lutherans take this for granted and don't even know why they believe what they believe. But, at least the "why" is there if you want to know it. You don't have to go beg an answer from a priest or a committee or a pope. Jesus loves for us to question him deeply. He wants us to ask the most difficult questions and demand the most difficult answers from him. He wants us to grab onto that anchor and hang on.

For those of you who think I have no self-restraint let me tell you what I wanted to entitle this sermon. I restrained myself because my sermon titles go out on the sign in front and I thought it might be a bit much if the community saw the title for this sermon as "Groping Jesus All Day Long." But I looked at the word Jesus uses with his disciples that we

translate as "TOUCH" when he says to them, in the Gospel, "Touch me!" That word really has the connotation of grope. He wants the disciples to roll up their sleeves and really get in there and feel that he is real. He says, "Grab a hold of me and know that I am as real as you are." Unlike his father in the Old Testament, who stood far off and could not be looked upon, Jesus wants us to touch him, to feel him, to experience him.

It is in our experience of Jesus, hearing his word to us and tasting his body and blood with our mouths that he opens our minds and changes our lives just as he did for the disciples in our Gospel for today. Who could believe all this resurrection nonsense? If it were not for Jesus opening our minds through his Word and Sacrament, not one of us could believe that he actually rose from the dead. We would relegate the story to a bunch of religious hoopla promulgated by disappointed zealots. But through his Word and Sacrament the Holy Spirit reaches into our hearts and creates and empowers faith and almost in spite of ourselves, in spite of our educated, advanced, intelligent selves, we find ourselves believing that he really did rise from the dead and if we believe that, everything is changed.

I think it is interesting that Christians often get the wrap for being "closed minded," because we have strong opinions as to what is right and what is wrong and some of us hold our ground even in the face of societal pressure. If I don't agree with the choices you make in life that are

opposed to what God clearly says, I am a closed minded person, but if I accept as right, meet and salutary every perversion society throws at me, then I am open and affirming. But if I am not allowed to disagree with open and affirming views, doesn't that make them closed minded?

I like Penn Jillett, a very famous atheist, because he defends free, open thought. He also defends living out what your belief system says so long as it does not harm or interfere with others. He even defends proselytizing! That is trying to convert others to your belief system. In one of his video blogs that Judy Bruschnik discovered for me, he says that if you saw someone who was about to be run over by a truck, wouldn't you push that person out of the way? In fact, how much would you have to hate them to do nothing and just allow them to be killed? Likewise, if you really believe in a heaven and a hell, it is hard to believe that you would just sit back and let a person go to hell without warning. But the reality is that it is far harder to believe in the resurrection from the dead than to deny it.

I bury people all the time and, so far, not one of them has climbed out of the casket and said, like in the Monty Python movie, "I'm not dead yet!" No one has ever witnessed resurrection since the dawn of the first millennium A.D. So to even believe in the resurrection, or creation for that matter, it requires super-natural intervention. The Holy Spirit has to reach into us through God's Word and through Holy Baptism and through

the body and blood of Christ and create faith in us. Only then are our minds opened and only then can we believe all the stuff we believe about God. Without that super-natural intervention, we would all have a closed mind. We would all be atheists.

But our minds have been opened and we do believe. So no longer do we have to battle the windmills of this world. Because his resurrection insures our resurrection, we know that this world is not our home. We are only passing through. No longer do we have to feel guilt and shame because his resurrection insures our resurrection and we know that all sin has been paid off. It no longer exists. The debt is cancelled. So there is nothing for which to feel guilt or shame. No longer do we have to worry and fret over our lives on this earth. This is just a journey. If you have tickets to the show at the Oriental downtown and the Eisenhower is backed up like usual, so what? Who cares about the quality of the trip downtown when you're on your way to an amazing performance! Opened minds. Opened tomb. And we rejoice.