

“Touch and Go”
Acts 3:12-19; 1John 3:1-7; John 24:36-48

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April 30, 2006
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“Touch and go.” It’s a phrase we sometimes use. Generally, it’s used when we’re not quite sure what is going to happen. It’s a little “touch and go.” Perhaps you’ve have those times in your own life that have been a little “touch and go” - a new job. As you begin to look for it, try to get, it can be a little “touch and go” - is it going to happen or not? That’s a “touch and go” with a little more anticipation in it. Other times we can be in relationship and recognize we get to rocky points that feel like they’re “touch and go” - about how the relationship will go. Sometimes we even talk about it in terms of life-threatening situations.

The disciples we hear about in today’s Gospel reading were in a situation that was a little “touch and go” for them. Jesus, whom they had put all their hope in, whom they were following, had just been crucified - killed by the authorities. In Matthew’s Gospel from last week, we hear how they were frightened, behind closed doors a lot of the time. Perhaps they were wondering, “Are the authorities coming to get us?” “What’s going to happen next?” It seemed a little “touch and go.” And then a couple of their numbers came and told them about what had happened on the road to Emmaus and they wondered. And in that wondering, that moment of feeling it was “touch and go” they encountered Christ. Christ came among them. Well, their first re-action, of course was one of fear. What in the world is going on? So Christ says, “Peace be with you.” You know, it is as Christ comes to those folks in the middle of that uncertainty, he really comes with an invitation to touch him and see him, to know him. It is really is a way of him touching their lives - coming and bring his grace to them; letting them know that they can still have confidence and move ahead. They are touched by Christ partly through the invitation to touch and see and partly by his presence.

I think about that word “touched”. Sometimes we use it to mean someone’s a little touched - a little crazy. And I wonder if the disciples in that moment felt a little touched, wondering if they were crazy. They knew something unusual, something was happening, that God was present. Another way we use that word “touched” is in a emotional way, something happens in our lives that touches us. It was a touching moment. I was touched by somebody else’s grief, or tenderness. In that moment, when I am touched in that way, all of a sudden the emotions come flooding in. I am touched and my emotions seem to go off.

The disciples as well, seem to be touched by Jesus’ presence as their joy flows, even in their disbelieving and wondering. The joy of seeing Jesus, perhaps the presence of God amongst them, in the reality that is present, they are touched. As we see them being touched by Jesus, we also see some other ways in which Christ touches the. He opens their minds. If we actually go back a little bit to the walk to Emmaus we would see that their hearts burned within them when they were in Jesus’ presence. As I’ve heard it recently - “they had holy heartburn”. There are ways in which when God is present, something happens. Our minds are open, our joy is present, perhaps there is

a burning. I believe that we all have the opportunity to be touched in that way and most of us can identify times in our lives when we feel touched. What are some of those times that might be ways in which we touch Jesus? You see, I think in many ways, just like those disciples, Jesus comes to us and says “touch and see.” I always hope that worship is a time when we touch Christ. We are touched by Him.

But there are other times: prayer, when we read the Word, when we live in the loving community of the family of faith, when someone loves us in a way we know comes through God. There are many ways in which we also are touched by Christ, that we get to see Christ at work among us. Touched by who he is and what he does and the forgiveness he’s given, the opportunity, as John’s epistle tells, to be children of God, touched by Christ.

I think of an example that usually we think about at Christmas time. In “A Christmas Carol” when Scrooge is finally touched by the life of Tiny Tim, his whole life is changed. And in that instant he looks a little touched. But touched with a joy. And so as Christ comes and touches his disciples, their lives are changed. As Christ comes and touches us as his disciples, our lives are changed and we’re called forth to know what Christ has done, to remember the forgiveness, the grace and called to be the heralds of it, to go forth in front, to be those who know and who can express the goodness of God - how God has touched us and indeed, be those through whom God touches others.

Donna DeBolt reminded me of one other kind of “touch and go” analogy. And that was when you are learning to fly you come down and touch and go, to be sure that you can land. Isn’t that often times what we do. How Christ works in our lives? Touch and go. We get the confidence of knowing the ground is there and we can go on. That he calls us forth. He calls us to live as his children, to show that love, to let the sin be wiped away and to live it out. To be touched by Christ and to go. Whether it’s to go to Africa, or whether it’s to go to work tomorrow and in either place live out the life that Christ calls us to. To proclaim with our lives the forgiveness we know, the love we’ve shared, the grace extended to us, to live as his people. So we get to touch and go, we get to touch how Christ has touched us, that we might go and live life as his children, as God’s people. You’re invited to “touch and go”. Amen.