



Several years ago, on our trip to Israel, I was fascinated to find myself visiting places where I know Jesus to have been. Our final day was spent visiting the Garden Tomb overlooking a mountain which has the appearance of a skull. The natural beauty of the trees and flowers added to the reflective atmosphere of the garden, and the tomb carved in the rock appeared as described in the gospels as the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Walking through the garden one could see groups from all over the world remembering Christ's death in worship, reflection, prayer and sharing of communion.

More important than knowing the exact place where it all happened is knowing for certain that Jesus died and that after his resurrection he met people in a beautiful way at their point of need. There was Mary, standing outside the tomb weeping. We see her overcome with grief and hopelessness. She knew that Jesus had been crucified but now she faces the reality that his body is gone. She came to spend time at the tomb but looking in she finds it empty. Her only thought was that someone had taken him away. Life seemed so hopeless to her. Then Jesus meets her in her pain and grief. Thinking it was the gardener, she asked where the body of Jesus had been taken. It was when Jesus spoke her name that she recognized him. What a moment of hope and joy! Jesus is still the same and wants to meet us as well in our moments of grieving, discouragement, pain or hopelessness. He calls us by name and says, "...you are precious in my eyes and honored in my sight, and ...I love you." Isaiah 43:4

Maybe we're more like Thomas who struggled with doubts about the truth of Christ's resurrection. He boldly stated his position when he said he would not believe unless he saw Jesus' hands, felt the wounds from the nails and put his hand in his side. Jesus appears to Thomas and meets him at his point of need and says, "See the wounds and place your hand in my side" and then in tenderness encourages him to believe. There were no words of admonishment and scolding just encouragement to believe. Maybe we find ourselves facing doubts in some area of our life today. The risen Lord comes to us and lovingly encourages us to believe in him and to trust him with every detail of our daily life.

We may also find ourselves identifying with Peter who probably experienced the greatest failure of his life when he denied Jesus three times. We read how Peter wept bitterly after he realized what he had done. But the story does not end there. Jesus seeks him out on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias where Peter was fishing. After pulling the fishing boat ashore with their catch of fish, Jesus singles out Peter and asks him three times if he loves him and with each response assigns him to the task of caring for his sheep. Not only was it a moment of forgiveness and acceptance for Peter but it was also an affirmation of his call to service. Peter's need was great, but Jesus met him just where he was at. Jesus is still the same. When we find ourselves facing the pain of failure, of having disappointed others and especially Jesus, then he reaches out to us with forgiveness and offers us another chance. As with Peter there is a new hope to begin again with the assurance of God's love and forgiveness.

Why did Jesus single out each of these three people? Each had a special need and Jesus touched them at their particular point of need. He had the right answer for each. For Mary the answer was hope that her relationship with Jesus was not ended, for Thomas it was evidence that he needed to believe and for Peter forgiveness was followed by a call to service. Today Jesus offers to meet us at our point of need as well. We too may be struggling with grief, doubt or failure. Or maybe our needs are entirely different but still he speaks into our life with the words from Phil.4:19 "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Yours in Christ,

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