

Sermon: *Let Me See Your Hands*
Text: *John 20:19-29*
Date: *April 19, 2009*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

Johnny was playing outside, doing all the things that little boys do: climbing trees, swinging on the swing set, running and jumping and rolling around on the ground with his dog. And when mama called him for supper, he went immediately to the table. So, when everybody was seated, mama looked over and said: *"Johnny, let me see those hands, young man."*

Well, Johnny rubbed his hands on the legs of his pants and slowly, held them up for everybody to see. And mama went ballistic. She said: *"Johnny, how many times have I told you to wash your hands before you come to the table? When you have dirty hands, you bring germs to the table and the next thing you know, we'll all be sick. Now, after we say grace, I want you to march yourself down to the bathroom and wash those hands."*

Everybody bowed their heads and daddy said the blessing. Then, Johnny got up and walked toward the bathroom. And just before he left the kitchen, he shook his head and under his breath he said: *"Jesus and germs! Jesus and germs! That's all I ever hear around here and I haven't see either one of them yet."*

On that first Easter, the disciples were gathered in the Upper Room, talking about the empty tomb and wondering if Jesus really had risen. And suddenly, He came and stood among them and they were afraid, but He showed them His hands and side. Now, they had seen these hands before. These are the hands that touched the blinded eyes. These are the hands that lifted up the crippled. These are the hands that blessed

the little children. And suddenly, they knew ... Jesus is alive!

But two of the disciples were missing that day. Judas, overwhelmed by guilt and shame, killed himself. And Thomas! We're not sure where Thomas was. Maybe he was somewhere alone in his grief. We don't know, but He wasn't there. Now, can you imagine Thomas' reaction when he came back and his friends were saying: "*We have seen the Lord*"?

I wonder if he thought it was a joke. Did he look around the room to see if anyone was laughing? Did he think they were all going crazy under the stress of the week? And yet, the more he protested, the more they insisted: "*Jesus is alive.*" So finally, Thomas said: "*I will not believe unless I see the nail prints in His hands and put my fingers in them and thrust my hands into His side.*"

Well, a week later, the disciples were together in the Upper Room and Thomas was there. And Jesus came and stood among them and walked up to Thomas and said: "*Thomas, put your fingers in my hands and put your hands into my side. Don't doubt any more. Believe.*" And Thomas fell to his knees before Jesus and said: "*My Lord and my God.*"

The hands of Jesus! In one of her hymns, Fanny Crosby wrote: "*I shall know Him, I shall know Him, and redeemed by His side I shall stand. I shall know Him; I shall know Him, by the print of the nails in His hands.*"

The hands of Jesus! What is it about those hands? Why didn't God take away the scars? Well, friends, you can tell a lot about a person by looking at their hands. You see ...

1. JESUS' HANDS REMIND US OF HIS SUFFERING.

One day, a boy sat staring at mama's ugly hands and he asked her: "*Mama, why are your hands so ugly?*" She said: "*Well Son, when you were a little boy, you got too close to the fireplace and your shirt caught on fire. And I ran across the room and threw you on the floor and just started beating the fire out with my hands. Oh, I was so relieved when you weren't hurt that I didn't even realize my hands were burned and scarred for life. That's why my hands are so ugly.*" And the boy took his mama's hands in his and said: "*Mama, these are the most beautiful hands in the world.*"

The poet wrote: "*They nailed those beautiful, blessed hands to the cruel bitter cross. And there in agony untold, He bore our shame and loss. Beautiful hands of Jesus! I hope someday to see – those wonderful, loving, nail-scarred hands that were pierced on Calvary.*"

Jesus' hands remind us of His suffering. Isaiah said: "*He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; He was chastised that we might have peace; and by His stripes, we are healed.*" Throughout eternity, those hands will remind us of His suffering

II. JESUS' HANDS REMIND US OF HIS LOVE.

A crowd gathered outside a burning house where a woman lived with her granddaughter. The woman had been overcome by smoke and the girl was trapped in an upstairs bedroom. Then, a man pushed through the crowd and climbed up the iron drainage pipe that led to the roof. The pipe was hot, but he made it to the

window, climbed inside, grabbed the girl and climbed back down that old hot, iron pipe.

Well, a few months later, there was a custody hearing for the little girl. The farmer said: "*Judge, I have a nice farm and I'll give the girl a good home.*" The teacher said: "*I can give the girl a great education.*" The banker said: "*Judge, I'll give the girl the finer things in life.*" But the judge was unimpressed. He said: "*Does anyone else have anything to say?*" And from the back of the room, a man said: "*These folks have so much to offer and all I have is my love.*" And he held up his hands that were scarred from his climb up that old hot pipe. And the little girl ran and jumped into his arms, because she knew he loved her. His hands were the proof.

Today, lots of things vie for our affection. We hear the call of money, pleasure, and success, but through the corridors of time steps a man, who by merely showing His hands, reminds us of God's love. Paul said: "*God showed His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us.*" His hands remind us of His love.

III. JESUS' HANDS REMIND US OF HIS CALL TO FAITH.

Thomas said: "*Unless I see His hands, I will not believe.*" Thomas doubted until the very moment Jesus said: "*Thomas, see my hands? Go ahead and touch them. Reach out and put your hand in my side.*" You know, sometimes, it's hard to believe. We all have doubts and unanswered questions. And sometimes, even the most faithful have said: "*What if this isn't true? What if Jesus*

was just a man? What if the things in this book are just made up stories?"

Listen: I've come to the place where I can say, "*That's okay.*" God is big enough to handle my doubts and questions. He didn't chastise Thomas for doubting. He simply challenged Thomas to believe!

So, I believe this story teaches us three things that we need to consider in the face of our questions and doubts:

First, we must be honest about our doubts. Thomas said: "*I don't believe it and I won't believe until I see it for myself.*" He was honest about his doubts. And guess what? The disciples accepted him anyway. They didn't ask him to leave because he didn't believe. O friends, we need to be honest with one another about our doubts because only then, can we learn and grow together.

Second, we need to stay in the Church. Thomas doubted, but he didn't leave. A week later, when Jesus appeared to the disciples again, Thomas was there. Many today, when questions and doubts arise, leave the Church or stay away from it completely. Let me ask you: Where else are you going to find the answers? Do you go to Harvey's to buy a new car? Do you dig a hole in the ground to find a star? No! You go to a car dealer to buy a car and you look in the night sky to see the stars. And friends, if you want answers to spiritual questions, you need to stay within the Church.

Third, we need to go as far as evidence will take us and then, take a step of faith. Thomas was seeking answers; he said, "*Unless I touch His hands and side, I will not*

believe,” but in the moment of decision, touching wasn’t necessary. He saw with his eyes and took a leap of faith: “My Lord and my God.” You know, someone has said: “*Faith is walking to the edge of all the light you have and taking one more step.*”

Hitler had ravaged Europe and was seriously threatening England. Even Winston Churchill had serious doubts about the future of his country, but he couldn’t allow his doubts to show. He had to rally his people. And so, he stood before the nation and said: “*When I look on the perils which we have already overcome, and upon the great mountain waves through which the ship has been driven, when I remember all that has gone right, I am encouraged to feel we need not be afraid that the tempest will overcome us. Let it roar. Let it rage. We shall come through.*”

Churchill translated his doubts into a deeper faith in his people. And in the process, he helped the people see beyond their doubts to a hope of overcoming a great storm. He went as far as he could possibly go and then, he believed.

Friends, you’ll never have all your questions answered. Not here! Not in this life! We just have to explore the evidence as far as it will take us and then take a step of faith. “My Lord and my God.”

There’s proof of His suffering in those hands; there’s proof of His love in those hands; there’s enough proof to base your faith on in those hands! And Jesus says to us: “Do not doubt! Believe!”