



## April 12 – Loss of the Glue

When our maternal grandmother died, it was a difficult time for the whole family. Mammie (that is what we called her) was an amazing person. She would be outside to greet us every time we went to the farm. She had fresh cookies ready. Knowing death was near, she even prepared her own obituary, service, and all of the details. Eight years later, Boppie died. The farm was sold. That was the one place that always felt like home. Now, we were without that home base.

In the years after Mammie's death, our Mom became that person. She rallied us together as Dad was dying. She would greet us when we visited. She made the cookies. Being around Grandma Bette felt like being at home. We would gather wherever she was. And wherever that she was felt like home. Then she too died. With her death, our family lived what I have seen with many other families. The glue that held us all together was gone. We have not seen each other near as much as we did when Mom was alive. The glue is gone.

As the Gospel text unfolds, the disciples are locked away in a room out of fear. They have every reason to be afraid. The Romans and the Judeans are out to "get them." Everyone but Thomas is afraid to be outside of those walls. You can imagine the tension as the room as they try to discern what is next. I imagine they were weighing the benefits of remaining a group of 11, or of going back home. Then Jesus appears in the room and says, "Peace be with you."

We often think of this as "Do not be afraid." There is that element to what Jesus says, but it is much deeper than that. The word translated "Peace" is "εἰρήνη" or "Eirene." It is often spoken of as peace or wholeness. The literal meaning is to "join together what is broken." In the way of speaking of peace and wholeness, it is to "put yourself together." Although Jesus is telling all of the disciples to "put themselves together," Jesus is also reminding them to bind themselves together again.

Jesus was the glue that held all of them together. They followed Jesus to places they had never dreamed of going. Now, as the face a future with Jesus, he returns to remind them to stay together. They need to find someone or something to be that glue which brings them together as one.

Thomas is not there. One does not have to speculate too far to see where that could create further division. Jesus returns and gives a message to the disciples, everyone but Thomas. Jesus appears a week later with the same message. This time Thomas hears it too. Join yourselves together again.

It would have been easy for the disciples to fall out of touch with one another and to go back to the lives they knew before. In the very next chapter, many of them go fishing. It would have been easy to go back to a quieter life and not have to look over your shoulder, watching for Rome or the Jewish leaders. Instead, the disciples were joined together in a different way. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, they find a new glue, and they are strengthened together. And through these two visits, one week apart, a new rhythm is established, one we still look to today. They joined together on Sundays, bound by the Spirit, and continuing the work and teachings of Jesus.

There is an increased level of division in the world today. We are becoming more isolated each year. We start to look at congregational ministry as a competition for limited resources. It is easy to let fear guide our decisions.

Jesus greets us today in the same way, "Peace be with you." Jesus reminds us that peace is about being calm. We are to be joined again. We are not navigating this difficult world alone. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit, and we find the glue which binds us together. The Spirit brings us together, in this space and online. We find our mission and purpose through the continuation of the work and teachings of Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Michael Schmidt