

Third Sunday of Easter  
April 30, 2017

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Theme: “Touch-and-Go”

“Touch-and-Go” can apply to several different situations. It may mean you are a bit ADD. You touch on one thing only quickly to go on to something else. It may not be a well known use, but it also is applicable to one learning how to fly. You perform touch-and-gos, you just touch down your landing gear and then you throttle up and go. It’s a way to practice landing. Touch-an-Go could mean it was a close one—questionable as to whether you would make it or not.

“Touch-an-Go” is also a stolen theme for this week. Originally I was going to go with “Clueless,” but then I attended the Jonesboro Circuit Pastors’ Conference which took place this past Monday at Peace Lutheran in Cherokee Village. Pastor Pummill of Peace used the phrase in relation to the disciples attitude about what had happened to Jesus, particularly focusing in on Thomas. So you could say his message touched me so I could go and reapply touch-and-go, but it a bit of a different way. Our prayer is always that we will be touched by God’s Word to be assured, equipped, and strengthened in our walk with Him.

Jesus had touched many. There was no argument with that. None had been touched in a more impactful way than the apostles and the larger circle of disciples that followed Jesus in many places. These two disciples of our text, Cleopas, and the one who remains unnamed, obviously had life changing experiences. They describe Jesus to Jesus (though they don’t know they are talking Jesus to Jesus) as a man who was prophet mighty in deed and in word. We know about those deeds and words, but what would it have been like to

have been there in person? There was never anyone like him. They also say, “We had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel.” (vs 21) Yes, Jesus had touched so many and those touched hoped to go forth in victory, a victory that fit their vision of a redeemed Israel.

But it turned out to be touch and go that had not gone so well. This close call touch-and-go, what’s the history behind that? It’s been suggested that it could have originated as two stage coaches met at high speed going in opposite ways. Both had to get out of the well worn ruts in the middle and hang to the outside of the road. This was often no easy task. The drivers cut it close, if close even to the point of just touching, that was okay. You would touch and then go, but too close, their wheels entangled, and well, a mess. This could also apply to ships. It could not be more than a little touch. With airplanes it really doesn’t work at all.

Touch-and-go, I can illustrate it with these two eggs. So it was looking good for Jesus around Jerusalem. He was like this pretty egg. But the opposition arose and, well, more than a little kiss or bump. It was disaster. It was such a touch that any thought of going was well, just gone. It was just a mess.

We probably have experience as to how that works. We have been involved in touch-an-go situations that don’t go so well. It was a touch that may have turned more into a wallop. It may be in the household—growing pains. The emerging adult is trying to figure this whole thing out and there are a few pitfalls. The growing one can be of a pain every now and then. It may seem the house has become more like a car rental facility than a home with some many coming and going. There may be an unwanted bump or two and few resulting cracks regarding health. It may be your health. It may be that of a loved one. We may have a close one when it comes to employment, even find our employment

has suffered a smashing blow. There could be days when it appears there is not much touching at all, that is no results, just spinning our wheels. Yes, we have had experiences with touch and gos that have gone south in a hurry.

The two disciples on the way to Emmaus have been touched with the blow of Jesus' death. They are trying to process it all. That's what they are doing while they walk to Emmaus. They may have concluded that some among them may have been a little touched with delusion. They tell Jesus about the Jesus reports. They say the women had amazed them, speaking of a vision of angels at the empty tomb who said Jesus was alive. We read in Luke 24:10, that these words seemed like an "idle tale." They also reported that some from their company had gone to the tomb to check it out (Peter, vs 12), and the body they did not see, but as they also are relaying to Jesus, no Jesus to be found.

Now this two disciples are shocked at the stranger's ignorance of events. "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened in these days?" He responds, "What things?" That has the idea of "like what?" Just who was this man, and where had he been? Had he been holed up in a cave somewhere? They were amazed. Maybe he was a little touched with confusion at the least. Remember, last week we also speculated that Thomas may have thought everyone who was saying Jesus was alive, had seen Him and heard Him, was a bit confused.

So when touch-and-go in our lives turns out to be much more touch than go, we may find it hard to believe that God is still in control. Why does He let this happen, more particularly, why does He let this happen to me? It's hard to go when things are just smashed.

But now in Emmaus it was time for a new touch, one that would result in go. It turns out this stranger was no stranger to the Scriptures. He certainly did not apply a

gentle touch in getting their attention, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” (vs 25) He then opened these Scriptures to them. He showed how it was necessary for the Christ to suffer before He entered into His glory. In this two hour walk to Emmaus (that is if He were with them the whole time) He walked them through Moses and the prophets and all the Scriptures.

And then they arrived, hopefully at a much more thorough understanding of what the Christ was all about, but certainly at their destination in Emmaus. Jesus made as though He would journey on. They insisted that he stay. It was evening, the day was far spent. Now we have a touching moment of recognition. Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. And suddenly their eyes are opened. It’s Jesus! Then He just disappears. And so do they, not in the same way, but they have to disappear from Emmaus. They must make the seven mile trip back to Jerusalem though the day is fully spent. They have gone from those spent, to those full of excitement. They have been touched with a new reality. It’s time to go and tell the others. So they do.

It turns out the others have something to tell also. Jesus is risen, has appeared to Peter. And now He appears to all gathered in that room. We know Thomas was not among them. Jesus touches with Scripture again, “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:46-47) In the mess there was Jesus, risen, had come to deal with the mess and bring new life.

Were they not touched by His appearance and His words? Right now they were to stay, but they would be going. They were to stay until they were clothed with power form

on high and then they would go, be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)

And they waited and were clothes and they were, witnesses. And because they did, we have been touched. As we consider our lives in the light of Scripture we may learn that it was not so bad as we thought, no it was worse. We were dead in our transgressions and sins without Christ and without hope. It was because of our sin that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and die. He did it to redeem us from the futile way of life handed down to us from our forefathers. He did it not with silver or gold but by His precious blood as the lamb without spot, blemish, of defect. (1 Peter 1:18, 19) We have been touched more than a little. We have been born again, not of perishable seed, but imperishable through the living and enduring word of God (1 Peter 1:23). This is the word of life, the word of Christ crucified and Christ raised. It is the good news of the ark of salvation, in baptism afloat in this perishable and perishing world, where touch-and-go spirals downward toward touch-and-gone.

Yes, these men gathered were touched with the good news, the great news. Thomas wasn't there. But the Lord would return next week when he was there. He would be touched. All these apostles were touched to go, and how did they go. They would not be stopped, not by threats, not by blows, not by hardship and not by lack. They could not help but speak of this Jesus mighty in deed and in word.

We are not so far removed from the experience of Thomas. Our Lord comes to us week after week after week. As we are gathered together He has promised to gather with us. He touches us. This week it is by His Word only, but usually it is more, think next week. He will come to us in His body and blood once more, come in a way we can physically touch, physically touch for our spiritual strengthening. Think of it this way.

Suppose your loved one was with you in the room. You could hear his voice, but on this particular occasion he is across the room, you cannot touch him, yet you are touched, encouraged by his words. But now comes next week. He's right beside you, reaches out his arms for an embrace. He holds you in his arms. Would you say, "no thanks, I'll just stick with the voice." Gracious and merciful is our Lord. In His Supper He comes to us in a tangible way, His body and His blood for me!

We are touched that we may go. We go in joy and convinced. We go in the unity of the Spirit. We go exalted to humble service. For Jesus' sake. Amen