

Some things are hard to believe. Have you ever found that to be true?

Recently one of the directors of the FBI told about a time when he discovered that to be true in his life. He was talking about when he was a part of a sting to see if a certain California Psychiatric hospital was illegally taking money from insurance companies.

It so happened that there was a team of 45 who had been working all day long. Near the end of the day, they still had a ton of work to do. So they decided to get some food. They ordered out for Pizza.

The director went to the phone and called the local Pizza Hut. When the phone was answered he said, "I would like to order 29 large pizzas and 45 cokes." The person taking the orders said, "Great, where would you like to have the pizzas delivered?"

"I would like to have the pizzas delivered to the psychiatric hospital."

"To where?"

"To the psychiatric hospital. There are 45 of us here. We are all FBI agents."

"There are 45 FBI agents at the psychiatric hospital?"

"Yes, we have been working all day and we are hungry."

"How are you going to pay for this?"

"I have my checkbook."

"You have a checkbook, and you are all FBI agents?"

"Yes, could you please deliver the pizzas here?"

"I don't think so." (click)

Yes, indeed some things are hard to believe. Isn't that a great story? What would you have done if you were the Pizza delivery person? What do you do when you find something hard to believe?

In our scripture for today, we are told that Jesus met the disciples on a mountain in Galilee. Right where he said he would. We are told that they worshipped him there, but that some still were having a hard time believing in him. Some still doubted.

I wonder why? What do you think? Why do you think some still doubted? Do you ever find yourself doubting God? Questioning faith? And what on earth might this passage tell us when we doubt?

**First of all, this passage tells us that Jesus drew near to them.** When life begins to sweep over and create oodles of reasons for us to doubt ourselves and our abilities, it is easy and tempting to think that we are all alone. It is easy to think that no one cares about us. It is easy to feel like we are out on a limb all by ourselves.

But this passage suggests that Jesus doesn't leave us alone in our doubt, Jesus comes to us. Did you know that there are only two places in this Gospel where Jesus draws near to the followers? This is one of them.

I think it is significant that Jesus draws near to the disciples when some of them doubted. It caused me to wonder when are the times of doubt and difficulty that I have discovered Jesus draw near to me, too?

Several things come to mind. But one I remember took place when I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in High School. I didn't have my driver's license yet, so I was pretty dependent upon friends for a ride.

On this occasion, I was waiting to be picked up by a close friend. I had had an argument with my parents earlier in the evening. I was feeling bad. My parents didn't want me to go out. I was determined to leave. You see, I had plans to go, hang out at McDonalds, drag main and have fun away from the watchful eye of my parents.

The appointed hour came for my friend to pick me up. But my friend never showed up. Fifteen minutes later, I was still waiting. 45 minutes later, I was still waiting. A little over an hour later, I was feeling miserable, unloved and uncared for. I just sat in the basement of my home, feeling alone, and sorry for myself.

That is when I felt Jesus; he came to me in the form of a hand. Attached to the other end of that hand, was my sister who was home visiting from College. She just came and sat by me.

She didn't say much. She didn't have to. Her actions told me what I needed to know. She drew near to me to let me know that I was loved and I wasn't as alone as I felt. In times of doubt, are you open in your life to the presence of God, willing to draw near to you?

**The second thing this passage challenges me to remember is that not only does God draw near to us, but we are sent into the world, to share God's love with others.** Now this is something that we have heard of before. But it is not easy to live and incorporate into our lives.

God is calling us to share the hope, the life and the faith we have received with others.

Howard Hendricks writes of what can happen in lives when we take this mandate, to go into the world and share our faith seriously. He says, "I was born into a broken home in the city of Philadelphia. My parents were separated before I was born. I never really saw my parents together except once - when I was called to testify in divorce court. I'm sure I could have been reared and died and nobody would have particularly have cared, except a small group of Christian believers who got together in my neighborhood to start a church.

"Walt belonged to that church. Walt had a sixth grade education. But he loved the Lord. He went up to the Sunday School

Superintendent and the pastor of the church one Sunday and said, 'I would like to teach a Sunday School Class.'

"The pastor looked at the Sunday School Superintendent and then he looked at Walt and said, 'That is wonderful Walt. But we don't have any boys. Go out into the community. Anybody you pick up - that is your class.'

"I'll never forget the day I met him,' Howard said. 'Walt was six feet, four inches tall. He said to me as a little kid, 'Son how would you like to go to Sunday School?'

"I thought anything with the word school in it had to be bad news and that must have shown on my face. Then Walt said, 'How about a game of marbles?'

"That was different. We got down and played marbles and he beat me every single game. By the time Walt and I finished playing, I didn't care where he was going, I wanted to follow him.

"Eventually Walt picked up 13 boys, nine from broken homes. Today, 11 are in full-time Christian ministry."

Howard went on to say, "I can't remember much about what Walt told me. But I can tell you this. He loved me into the faith for the sake of Jesus Christ. And I am in ministry today because of a man who not only loved me into the faith, but taught me how to invest in others too."

My friends, I am convinced that God is calling us at Sun Prairie United Methodist Church to expand our horizons and share our faith and hope with others. We are the ones who are sent into the world today.

May God help us live lives of faith.

Amen