



Sermon, April 23, 2017  
Camp Sunday  
Rev. Dr. Craig S. Pesti-Strobel  
Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

## **“High-Touch Faith”**

### **John 20:19-29**

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

**19** When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” **22** When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” **24** But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” **26** A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” **28** Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

*(This Sunday was Camp Sunday, so the sermon was delivered in an informal, morning watch style, covering the following points.)*

Last Sunday was Easter, and we are now in what is called the “Easter Season,” which continues up until Pentecost, which this year will be on May 23rd. This morning’s reading continues the story.

*Informally review the story above.*

What do you notice about Thomas? He just wants real physical evidence, doesn’t he? What today is based upon real physical evidence? (Answer: Science, and anything based on science, such as medicine, technology, mechanics, electronics, etc.)

So, Thomas was pretty modern in his wish to have a physical basis for his faith. He is probably actually a lot like us. Don’t we all want some tangible expression of faith? Like a hug when we are down, or the reassuring presence of someone who reminds us that we are loved by

God, or someone to bring us food or water when we are hungry or thirsty, someone who visits us in the hospital or if we are grieving the loss of someone. If you think about it, Jesus was all about tangible expressions of faith, wasn't he?

I call this "high-touch faith." Thomas needed this high-touch sort of faith.

One of the highest-touch places for faith is at any one of our many church camps across the conference.

Church camp is based around person-to-person interactions and relationships, person-to-God connections and deep immersion in God's great creation. It's not about videos, television, computer screens or iPhones. It is high-touch by design and purpose.

- How many of you have ever been to one of our church camps?
- How many of you have ever been a counselor, dean or resource person?
- How many of you have had children or grandchildren attend one of our church camps?

We believe in a high-touch faith. That is because at the very center of our faith is the declaration that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The god who created and sustains this vast starry universe and authored this vast profusion of life on earth and everywhere else took on human flesh in order to "press the flesh" with all of us. God came in the form of Jesus Christ in order to "get in touch" with us. That is what church camp is all about. Getting in touch with God. It's all about getting in touch with what God loves as well – other people, and the entire natural world. There is something about touching the sacred ground of camp, listening to the wind in the trees, the river rushing by or the ocean waves crashing at the beach, smelling the pine trees or sagebrush, feeling the high mountain morning chill that helps you get in touch with your Creator.

This morning, I would like to hear from you how God has touched you through one of our church camps. How have you experienced a high-touch faith?

*Invite people to give testimonies of faith and camp.*