

“WHEN LOGIC IS DISRUPTED”  
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According to vocabulary.com, the word “logic” refers to a system of reasoning or a series of complex methods or rules which guide our behavior. So, what happens to us when the logic of our lives is challenged?

That is the question raised this morning by the story we hear in the Gospel of John. To see what John proposes, we need to look at the section of the reading which focuses on our friend, Thomas. Before the incident in today’s Gospel, little is known about Thomas. We believe he was a twin because his name in Greek—Didymos—means twin. And John has characterized him as loyal to Jesus and a bit fatalistic because when, earlier in the Gospel, Jesus proposes that he and the disciples go to Bethany where Lazarus is believed to lay dying, Thomas loyally supports the idea even though they all know that Bethany is a very dangerous place for them to be.

So here in today’s story, we get another look at this loyal, melancholic man after the death of Jesus. According to this story, Thomas has been away from the rest. The logic of his life has been disrupted and all the rules by which he made sense of this world have been stripped away. Jesus has died. And now, upon Thomas’ return to the locked room, according to his fellow disciples, Jesus has come back to life! It is beyond comprehension. Thomas no longer knows where he can find solid ground on which to stand.

And so he reacts. Filled with raw emotion he rejects the disciples’ story. “I will not believe this UNLESS I can put my finger in the mark of the nails,” he says. But then...a week later...something happens. Jesus appears again in the same way the disciples described before. Only this time, Thomas is there to witness it and, when he does, a new logic is given to Thomas which he claims when he says, “My Lord and my God” to Jesus.

So in this story we have a progression:

- 1 The logic of a man’s life is stripped away.
- 2 An emotion is stirred up and claimed.
- 3 God enters the picture and a NEW logic is given.

It is a pretty common human experience, I think. Actually, I remember about 17 years ago, I went to the Diocese of Newark’s Camp Crossroads for one last week of the summer as a volunteer chaplain. I had been the camp cook there for a number of years, so I knew a lot of the staff from the time they had been campers. As a result, I always looked forward to my visits. But this time was different. Almost immediately upon arrival, I noticed the camp staff was subdued and, in some cases even surly. Smiles were few; energy was low.

In fact, as I parked my car on that Sunday, I saw Matthew, a counselor I knew very well. He was by his car and throwing things into the trunk, getting ready to leave—not arrive, as would be normal on a Sunday. “Hi, Matt!” I said as I got out of my car. “What’s up?”

“Leaving,” he said. “They fired Jack from the kitchen for no reason..”

“Leaving?” I replied stupidly.

“Not for good,” he said. “Be back Tuesday...I need a break.”

Now this was very odd because counselors NEVER got Mondays off but caution and uncommon good sense prevailed and I just said, “OK...see you then.”

Then as I settled in and began to hear the stories of the summer that year, I realized that the logic of camp life had been disrupted and no one on staff knew where they stood any longer. You see, the camp director and her husband, the camp cook, were having serious marital problems and none of the staff knew what to expect at any moment. It was very unsettling.

On the following Tuesday when Matt returned, he appeared to be the only counselor who had any energy. So when I had a chance, I asked him about his strange disappearance.

“Well,” he said, “This has been an awful summer...you wouldn’t know the place. Liz [the director] is always angry and Jim [her cook husband] is totally off the wall unpredictable. The counselor are all demoralized and last week, when Jim fired Jack, it was the last straw for me. So I went to Liz’s office to quit and leave. So many people have done that that we are at about ¾ staff now. But then, as I sat waiting outside her door, I remembered all the years I have been here and how the place had been and how much I actually owed Liz. So, instead of quitting, I told her I needed a day away...and here I am! Back and working!”

“Wow,” I said, “Well done, Matt! You handled that very well.”

So why do I tell you this little story this morning? Well, I think it follows the pattern that we find in the Gospel.

- 1 The logic of a person’s life is disrupted.
- 2 The person’s emotions are stirred up and identified.
- 3 God enters the picture and a NEW logic is given.

In Matthew’s case,

- 1 Camp had become an unpredictable experience.
- 2 He grew angry and was able to name that.
- 3 He remembered a relationship he had (in this case with Liz) and he allowed that history to help him find a new logic for camp life.

So what does this mean for us today? Well, a lot is happening around here. For instance:

- 1 The two churches have formed a visioning committee and soon you will have three meetings to look at where you have been (the past), where you are (the present), and where you want to be (the future).
- 2 I am going on sabbatical, which means that this year, instead of being gone for one month, I will be away for three.
- 3 And then (just for fun), this year because of a flood, the two parishes shared the Holy Week/Easter experience together. Complete with all the joys—and challenges!

I would say that, as in the story of Thomas, the logic of our parishes has been disrupted and the rules which guide our behavior have been tested. So what do we do? I would suggest that each person needs to ask “How do I feel?” and we need to claim these emotions. And finally, we need to look for God in this picture. We can ask ourselves, “Where are we finding energy and hope here in the midst of change?”

So while I am away and while our beloved Charlie and Dorothee guide the ship of church, I leave you with three questions to hang on to; three questions to ask yourself:

- 1 How do I feel?
- 2 Why do I feel this way?
- 3 Where is God in this picture?

And when you ask yourself these questions, I promise you will find a new logic, new insights, new rules to guide your behavior going forward.

And so I pray:

May God bless you and keep you. May God make his face to shine upon you and give you peace—‘til we meet again!