

April 8, 2018
Sermon for Second Sunday of Easter
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
1 John 1:1–2:2

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

1 John 1–2:2 (ESV)

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. ⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1 ¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Picture a delivery room. A new mom has just given birth to her first child.

The young son is placed in her arms. She holds the baby close. She reaches down and taps his nose, squeezes his cheek, lets the baby curl his tiny fingers around her index finger.

There's something about just the right touch. It says, "I love you." It communicates closeness, assurance, comfort, warmth, and happiness.

Touch tells you that the other person is alive, real, there—and so are you. We need just the right touch, to touch and be touched in just the right way.

Research shows that children who grow up without little or no physical contact, no loving touch—those that are abandoned or left alone for much of the time—grew at a slower rate, were sicker, had trouble socially, and displayed more angry and depressed emotions.

One cruel cold war experiment where babies were only touched to be changed or fed, let to many of them wasting away and even dying, by the lack of a loving, comforting touch. <https://stpauls.vxcommunity.com/Issue/Us-Experiment-On-Infants-Withholding-Affection/13213>

And it doesn't stop after you grow up. When you meet that special someone, you want to hold hands, caress a cheek, put your arms around each other, sit close.

The front seats of cars now are probably much safer than when I was a teenager. But back then, when you were going out, your date could sit right next to you,

close enough to touch each other. Although bucket seats are much more comfortable, I'd still sit closer to my wife if I could .

I'm sure many of you who are married have that secret touch that says "I love you."

We need just the right touch, to touch and be touched in just the right way. The right kind of touch says love, assurance, closeness, comfort and happiness. Touch says the other person is there, alive, real—and so are you.

We also need just the right touch, to touch and be touched in just the right way by God. And we are.

The Church has a special word to describe when God could touch and be touched. Incarnation. God came to earth and took on human flesh and blood.

When the Virgin Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, she gave birth to Jesus, fully divine, but also fully human.

Jesus was someone she could touch.

Yes, when Mary touched Jesus, tapped His nose, squeezed His cheek, let Him curl His tiny fingers around her index finger, she was touching God and He was touching her.

God became flesh and dwelt among us. People saw Him. They heard Him. They touched Him. Incarnation—because we need to be touched in just the right way, not just by each other, but especially by God.

Jesus blessed the children in touch: ¹⁵ *Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they*

rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

He touched the blind man, placing mud on his eyes, restoring his sight (Jn 9)

The woman touched His cloak and was healed (Lk 8:43–48), Jesus washed the disciples’ feet (Jn 13:1–11). As well as many other times. Some recorded, some not.

We have a God who became flesh and dwelt among us to touch us in just the right way.

John says people could see Jesus, listen to Him, and touch Him with their hands. Jesus is God incarnate, and His touch says love, closeness, warmth, assurance, joy. His touch says He is alive, real, and there for you!

Now you know why leprosy was such a devastating disease in biblical times. While it encompasses a variety of skin diseases, leprosy also destroys the nerve endings so you can’t feel anything. You lose the sense of touch.

Even worse, you were banished from the community. No one could touch you or even come near you. You became untouchable and lost the love and warmth, the closeness and joy that came with touch. Were you still alive and real? It didn’t seem so.

It still happens—this loss of touch and being touched.

An abandoned child. A child left alone for hours on end. A child who isn’t held or doesn’t have a lap to sit on while listening to a book.

A marriage gone bad. No touches of love. No secret hand squeezes. No caress of the cheek or big old bear hugs.

But the most devastating loss of touch in this life is death. Sometimes families will stay in the hospital room after someone has died. I sat with one mother who had lost her son in his early twenties. She could touch his hand and his face, but his skin was cold and lifeless. He couldn't touch back. The son was gone.

No more touch.

No touch. How Devastating.

But the most horrific loss of touch is when we no longer can touch God or He no longer touches us in just the right way.

That may be the worst part of hell.

Sure, the endless fires sound bad, but the loss of touch, the total separation from God, means no love, warmth, closeness, assurance, joy.

No right touch. What a horrible eternity that would be.

Because of His agape, His unconditional love, God becomes incarnate.

He becomes flesh and blood in Christ Jesus. And His blood purifies us from everything that would keep us from touching Him now and forever.

On the cross, Jesus takes on this most devastating loss of touch. He cries out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Mt 27:46).

Jesus no longer touches His Father in heaven. His Father is no longer touching Him. Even though it was just a little while, how devastating and frightening it must have been.

But Jesus is taking death and hell at their worst, the loss of touch with God, so that we could touch and be touched by God forever.

Then He rises from the dead. Christ is risen!

We say that because He lives, we, too, shall live.

Remember Thomas, doubting Thomas. He wasn't there when Jesus first appeared risen from the dead.

He wouldn't believe unless he touched Jesus. A week later, Thomas is with the disciples. Jesus appears. He speaks to Thomas. *"Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side"* (Jn 20:27).

Just the right touch, as Thomas says, *"My Lord and my God!"* (v 28).

We, too, need to touch and be touched by Jesus in just the right way.

How and when does that happen?

In our Baptism, the sign of the cross is made on our foreheads and hearts.

As the water touches the child or adults head, as it drips back into the font, Jesus is there. Just as He welcomed the little children, He is blessing anyone who comes to Him in that refreshing water.

At the baptismal font, we touch and have been touched by Jesus in just the right way.

It happens when we come up to the altar. Here we see and touch Jesus once again. He has promised to be in that piece of bread, that sip of wine.

His very body; His very blood.

Not a cold statue, but the real, living Jesus. Right there. Flesh and blood.

Among us. Touching us. Us touching Jesus.

In that Sacrament, Jesus is close, saying, "I love you." He is giving assurance, comfort, and joy as He purifies us from all sin. He is real, present, and alive—and so are we when we touch that bread and wine, that body and blood.

We need the greetings and handshakes, the hugs and holds of our loved ones on earth. But even more, we need the touch of the blessings and water.

We need the touch of the body and blood in with and under the bread and wine.

We need to touch and to be touched by Jesus now in this life and also face-to-face, just like Thomas did, in eternity.

We will, face to face. One day we, too, will have the joy and wonder of touching Jesus just as Thomas did.

His resurrection says our hope is that touch and being touched will not end at the grave, but will be ours once again on the Last Day and for all eternity.

The leper, the abandoned child, the brokenhearted, the grieving parents, the son who remembers—we need just the right touch, to be touched in just the right way. Jesus' incredible gift to us is that we are, and we will.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline
We Need Just the Right Touch, in Just the Right Way.

1 John 1:1–2:2

- I. The right touch fosters growth and health.
- II. Loss of touch is destructive and scary, especially from God.
- III. Jesus was out of touch on the cross; but not for long.