

## Devotion – Twelfth Week after Pentecost

**Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

I just returned from the Women's Connection Conference at Montreat, and thank you for letting me take a weekend off to attend. I love this conference because it's in the mountains, they feed you well, and most of all, women of all ages come from across the U.S. This year we had over 500 women there, from college students to great grandmas, all in masks. The theme was "Word Wise: Encountering the Word that Draws Us In and Sends Us Out." The Rev. Dr. Alice Ridgill preached two sermons that made me think I was in an old fashioned revival. The Rev. Dr. Frances Taylor Gench taught two Bible Studies on tyrannical texts in the Gospel, and how to wrestle with them instead of just throwing them away (look up 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and you'll see why we wrestled with it!).

A very popular author, blogger, speaker, Instagrammer, TV speaker, and Podcaster, Jen Hatmaker, spoke Saturday night. People from around Montreat bought tickets to hear her, so we had a large crowd. I didn't know this woman before, but I'm going to read her books. She's been through a rough year with an unexpected divorce. She and her ex-husband have 5 children – 3 of their own and 2 they adopted from Ethiopia. She laughingly described a household with kids who are now age 15-23, when none of them will leave home, even after college. But this has been a painful year and she used 3 stories from the Gospel of John to describe her journey in this "liminal" time: when Mary Magdalene finds the tomb empty and brings Peter and John back with her. They look in the tomb and just realize that Jesus is truly gone. Nothing more. Mary stays but doesn't recognize Jesus when he appears, until he calls her by name. And she goes back and testifies to seeing the Lord. And then Thomas is absent when Jesus appears later in the room where the disciples are locked away in fear, and Thomas says that he will not believe that Jesus has been resurrected unless he sees and touches his scars.

Jen said that Thomas needed to see a human Jesus to acknowledge his resurrection – not some glowing, shining, perfect man in a white robe – but someone who had been wounded. And that thought has given her hope for the hard times – like these COVID times – or other times of pain and illness we've been through. Jesus was wounded. He suffered terribly. And because he was wounded, he can see our wounds and comfort us. Because "by his wounds, we are healed."

Amen, Sister.

***Jeanne***