

Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation  
God's slaps in the face

Jenny Anderson

1 May 2009

John 20:19-29

(Following along with the children's book, "There's a monster at the end of this book" by Grover from Sesame Street, the bold words are the page of the book)

"Peace be with you" —the words Jesus speaks to his disciples not once but twice when he appeared to them after his resurrection, and again when Thomas is present. I chose this Gospel lesson to share with you today because I have come to recognize them as a precious gift. And these words have become more precious over my four years at Augie.

Before I begin however, another thing you should know about me is that I love kids, of any age, but especially babies and toddlers. One of the reasons I love them is because they remind me of how simple the world can seem. And not surprisingly they did it again as I was planning this sermon, I knew children would come into play somehow, somehow. I mean how could they not?! So I found this children's book to walk through some of my experiences these last four years at Augie.

What did that say? On the cover, what did that say? Did that say there will be a Monster at the end of this book??? It did? Oh, I am so scared of MONSTERS!!!!!!

Fear, doubt, being down right scared of where life is taking us. Not knowing what's coming next. Not being able to predict it, wanting to resist the change and not even knowing how to do that. For me, it's the realization that my time at Augie is almost complete. I am almost able to call myself an alum, and that scares me a lot, and reminds me of times I was scared, confused, and even a little rebellious during my time here. Having classes challenging me and pushing me to contemplate the direction of my life while at the same time people asking me what my plans are for the future. Can't I just stay with what I know? Life would be much less confusing wouldn't it? I mean, ignorance is bliss right? For the disciples, maybe it wasn't really. They were stuck in mourning the loss of their great teacher. They couldn't remember anything Jesus had told them before He left, and they were throwing themselves a little pity party.

Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, listen, I have an idea. If you do not turn any pages, we will never get to the end of this book. And that is good, because there is a Monster at the end of this book. So please do not turn the page.

Now, coming to college was a big deal. I was very excited to meet people, live away from home, and start learning new things. However, I could not prepare myself for what I would learn. During Fall of freshman year we were discussing Lutheran beliefs in Dr. Croghan's Reli 110 class and were told that sin is unbelief. Now this caused me to say shhh. I don't know what to think about this, do I even want to think about this? How does this fit into how I've been living and thinking about my whole life? Confusion. Fear. Annoyance. God turns the page to have you think about it. I was trying to lock my mind up to keep it safe from ideas that would shake my world. Just as the disciples hid in a house with all the doors and windows locked because they were scared they would be recognized and killed or ridiculed like Jesus was. They were trying to preserve themselves, to keep themselves safe from danger.

YOU TURNED THE PAGE! Maybe you don't understand. You see, turning pages will bring us to the end of this book and there is a Monster at the end of this book .....but this will stop you from turning pages. See? I am tying the pages together so you cannot ...

And then, God turned the page on them. Jesus appeared to the disciples. Standing among them. But life doesn't stop, even when we're too scared to see where it is taking us. I started working at a Lutheran summer camp the summer after my freshman year, that first summer I learned more about the gospel, by living out the gospel and being challenged everyday. I learned you are unable to predict what will happen next, that was life in a nutshell. Just as Grover tied himself up to keep from turning the page, I tied myself up with classes, track and studying when my grandpa died the Fall of my Sophomore year. I didn't want the page to turn. I couldn't understand, and still struggle with, why it happened when it did, and why I was the last one to talk to him before he died. In addition, I hadn't figured out what I believed entirely and if sin as unbelief was how I knew it to be all along, but just not expressed that way or a new way of looking at it. I was frustrated, mad, and at a loss for where my life was taking me. What should I do with these things?

YOU TURNED ANOTHER PAGE!!! You do not know what you are doing to me! Now ..STOP TURNING PAGES!

To add to that, I had questions about my role in the family I was working with, doing therapy with a little boy with autism. I have been an athlete all my life. Is it time to be done? Can I even imagine it ending? If I view the Bible as a historical document, where does that leave me? My grandma's dementia is worsening after my grandpa died. How can I be there for my family? When will I meet my husband and why haven't I yet?

I suspect we all have thoughts like these, when life seemingly gets to be too much. When you question why was another page turned in my life? Just stop! I can't handle this ..but in these moments God does things. I call them slaps in the face when

God interrupts you. Sometimes one is enough, but we may also need many slaps to look outside of ourselves. God says, "Peace be with you".

THERE! I, Grover, am nailing this page to the next one so that you will not be able to turn it, and we will not get any closer to the monster at the end of this book.

Each one of us has ways to ignore uneasy feelings. We deny them to ourselves, our friends and family, we do this when we need a change but don't know how or what that change is so we just stay put. I know times when I ignored feelings of frustration and fear about being done with track, avoiding classwork because of its confusing nature, just give me the answers already! Ignoring an email long enough so it's past the time they needed help or a response without feeling like I turned them down. These are all attempts to keep ourselves away from danger that may shatter our present world. We build a wall, lock ourselves in, hide from things that seem like they would bring us down.

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! Do you know that every time you turn another page ..you not only get us closer to the Monster at the end of this book, but you make a terrible mess!

This is when we say fine! I will help with that meeting, be a leader, discuss in class, fill in for someone BUT, this will just make more of a mess. I get that I'm supposed to serve my neighbor, turn the other cheek, be the shoulder to cry on, and that I can't stop the world from going on ..but what a mess! The disciples couldn't stop Jesus from being crucified, at least they didn't think so, none of them tried. What happened was over, but now what? It is all just a mess. No leader any more, no guidance or support. Their world was shattered, they couldn't comprehend why any of it happened and don't know what to do from there. Jesus says, "Peace be with you." Not, where were you guys? Look at the mess that has been made while you hid in here. Instead he repeats himself, "Peace be with you. As the father has sent me so I send you." Really? The mess of a person I am, you are sending me? I don't think so.

This will stop you from turning pages. A heavy, thick, solid, strong, brick wall. I would just like to see you try to turn this page.

This will stop you. Have you felt that assurance when you knew for a fact the way something was supposed to be. When your way was, is and will always be the best way, the only way to do something. When you deny something so strongly you put up a brick wall, like Grover, not letting anything come through that would damage your point or idea. When you dare others to prove you wrong, saying "I double-dog dare ya." How long does that feeling of awesomeness last? The disciples thought this earlier in the gospel, when they were traveling with Jesus. The miracle worker, declaring the word, changing water to wine and feeding the multitudes. That was the life, the disciples obviously knew the answers, Jesus was going to be their King, he was going to

overthrow the Roman officials and reclaim power and authority for the Jews. They proclaimed how much they believed in him, of course preferably in ear-shot of Jesus, so He knew how great that disciple was. I would imagine we have similar attitudes as the disciples, to solidify are place among our peers and society; Building up brick walls to protecting ourselves from the world around us.

Do you know that you are very strong?

But in those moments, we are reminded —or slapped in the face once again, that as much as you want to deny the change that is occurring in your life, by doing everything in your power to ignore it God will tear that wall down, in some way or another. When you start to wonder if that is really what you want to do or be or not want to do. This has come to me when I realized I do like studying theology, leading me to the possibility of Seminary in my far-off future, when I realized it really was time for me to be done with track, or when I realized I can't give up working at camp, yet. In these slaps, these moments when the wall comes down by the power of the Holy Spirit and you see things clearly, when Peace comes upon you. A sigh of relief and contentment runs through you, even if it is only for a moment before all of the emotions start. That split second is you being made new, your transformation, the old being washed away. Even if it doesn't last long.

I again am reminded of children. At camp, we have a song called Be Still, which is, "Be Still and know that I am God", except this song does not attempt to have kids be still for longer than a moment. Throughout the song we 'freeze' in our action and then continue singing. The moment is priceless, the stillness is quick. God gives us those moments of peace, leading to recognition and rejoicing, like the disciples when they saw the scars on Jesus' hands and side.

The next page is the end of this book, and there is a monster at the end of this book. OH, I am so scared! Please do not turn the page, please, please, please

And yet, peace is fleeting, fear & doubt return, not unlike the disciples. Thomas was absent from Jesus' first reappearance, his fellow disciples told him of the account and that it would be ok, but he simply wanted proof. He along with the other disciples had forgotten the promise Jesus gave them before he was crucified: that He would come again, until Jesus revealed himself to them in that locked room.

I, like Grover, say "OH I am so scared!" Graduation is quickly approaching, am I ready for what's coming next in my life? Although people I trust tell me to go to Seminary, I'm not convinced I don't also want to be a Speech-Language Pathologist. God will get me, when the time is right, He will slap me in the face again. Because no matter how scared we are for the next phase in our life, whether it be graduating college, getting married, having a baby, letting your child go off to camp, or college,

losing a loved one, or changing careers. Jesus says, "Peace be with you. As the father has sent me, so I send you"

Well, look at that! This is the end of the book, and the only one here is ..ME! I, lovable, furry old Grover, am the monster at the end of this book. And you were so SCARED!

I told you and told you there was nothing to be afraid of.

Oh, God has sent me. I was given the Holy Spirit to remind others that their sins are forgiven. Didn't I tell you not to be afraid? I mean, it couldn't have been me who was unsure how things would turn out could it? God comes to us in our moments of despair and joy, reminding us that He sends us out to proclaim the Word. And He gives us Peace. "Be still and know that I am God."

Oh, I am so embarrassed ...

Thanks for reminding me it's you God, not me who is in control.

God giving me the faith to declare His Word, saying "My Lord and my God!" just as Thomas did. Reminding me to not doubt but believe with His slaps in the face.

May the body and blood which surpasses all understanding be with you now and forever, Amen.

# MORNING WORSHIP

Friday, May 1, 2009

**Prelude**                    *“Create in Me a Clean Heart”*

**Welcome/Announcements**

**Invocation**

**Confession** - words from ‘I believe in Jesus’

I believe in Jesus. I believe He is the Son of God.

I believe He died and rose again.

I believe He came for us all

And I believe that He’s here now, standing in our midst,  
with the power to heal us and the grace to forgive.

**Scripture**

Romans 12:2-3

Psalm 46:10

John 20:19-29

**Message**

“God’s slaps in the face”

Jenny Anderson

Majors: Communication Disorders/Psychology

Hometown: North Branch, MN

**Hymn**

“When Peace Like a River”

ELW 785

**Benediction**

Colossians 3:13-17

**ALL: Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the Peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through Him.**

**Dismissal**

L: Go in Peace to love the Lord and Serve your neighbor.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

L: And all God’s people said

C: **AMEN!!**

L: The devil said

C: **Bummer dude**

**Postlude**

*THANK YOU to all friends, family, and faculty who have supported me the last four years. A special thanks to Jessica Maske, Laura Leckband, Rebecca Hindman and Annaliese Pepin for helping with the service.*

*- Jenny*

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## **CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CALLING ALL LUTHERAN CAMP COUNSELORS!!** - The Admission Office and the Office of Church Relations would like to present an Augie sweatshirt and cap to all returning Augie students who are working at a Lutheran Camp this summer. **There will be a commissioning service on May 11<sup>th</sup>** where the gifts will be presented. Please sign up on the form on the Narthex table or let Carol in the chapel office know.

**BIBLE STUDY** -Commons Lounge, Mon., 6 pm. Everyone welcome!!

**BREAD FOR THE WORLD** - After chapel on **Friday, May 1 and Sunday, May 3**, you can write letters to your state representatives. Don't know what to say? Don't worry! There is a sample letter that you can use or base your own letter off. It literally takes minutes and really does make a difference! If you have any questions, contact Miranda Andersen - [mmandersen06@ole.augie.edu](mailto:mmandersen06@ole.augie.edu)

**FOOD TO YOU** - On **May 7**, Outreach Ministries teams will be helping with the new mobile food pantry in Sioux Falls called "Food to You." The Outreach teams are seeking donations of tuna, tuna helper or cash to go towards the purchase of either item. **A box of tuna helper and a can of tuna costs just over \$2!!** Augustana has also been asked to contribute \$200 to the "Food to You" program. The intention is to provide these gifts for at least 100 families. **We are also looking for volunteers to distribute the food on Thurs. May 7<sup>th</sup>.** Questions, contact Kate Campbell, Miranda Andersen, or Kayla Rockwell.

## **CHAPEL SCHEDULE**

Sunday (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Jessica Maske, '09
Monday (4 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Pr. Paul
Tuesday (5 <sup>th</sup> )	Roman Catholic Mass, 10 am - Fr. Jim Bream
Wednesday (6 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Pr. John Halverson, Augustana Luth
Friday (8 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Clarissa Thompson, Sr. Spkr.
Sunday (10 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul