One of the traditional names for the Sunday after Easter (which is today just in case you weren’t paying attention last week) is Low Sunday. The origin of the name, like the water in the church bathrooms, is a little murky. The word “low” might be used to contrast the high holy days of the Easter Season, it might be a reminder of the low attendance or perhaps the low energy of the service. But whatever its origin, it gives the feeling that this Sunday is not really all that important and I think that is a bit of a shame because if you notice in our readings Jesus does not take this day off. He was busy doing things like passing out the Holy Spirit and granting Thomas’ rather odd nail wound request. And while Easter is certainly dramatic and world changing, I think today has a point and is important in its own way for it serves as a reminder that most of life is not lived in the dramatic moments but rather in the more mundane times. However, it is not just the fact that this is where most of life is lived, but it is also the place where most of the permanent changes in life happen. Great athletes achieve greatness in the long slog of training, they are merely recognized for it in the competitions. If you want today’s importance summarized in mathematical terms think of this ratio: Easter Sunday is one day, well actually just one moment – Jesus is raised in a moment and the Disciples discover he is raised in another moment. And yet Jesus stayed around for another forty days after the resurrection meaning that the ratio of mundane or low days to dramatic or high days is at least forty to one. And what I think this points out is that Jesus realized that one massive event that changes the course of human history requires a lot of the ordinary to understand it and to make the changes permanent.

I think one of our problems these days is that no one really wants to take the forty days. We want to live in the thrilling times and not be bothered by the day in and day out where the ramifications of the thrilling event are made real. Think about this: in more normal times we would have had over one hundred people at the Easter service but maybe only around forty at this service. But, of course, it is not just church where people only want to focus on the mountain top experiences. Years ago, I was watching a documentary on the space program. It started by showing President Kennedy’s famous speech before congress on May 25, 1961 where he talked about landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth by the end of the decade. It then cut to Neil Armstrong saying his famous “one small step for man” line. It gave the impression that Kennedy spoke the moon landing into existence. If you can trust the internet there were 2,978 days between the speech and the landing. These were 2,978 days where over 400,000 mission controllers, engineers, astronauts, mathematicians, welders, computer specialists, janitors, doctors, nurses, truck drivers, liquid propulsion specialists and countless others worked to make this vision a reality. Certainly, the speech is a good starting point, but without all of this work it would have just been a speech. The thrill of the speech and the moon landing were .07% of what it took to accomplish the mission.

And while the resurrection did change everything in a moment God also realizes that we need more than a moment to change ourselves. It requires our participation with the living God. That is really what the 40 days Jesus spends after being raised from the dead are all about. It is about making that new reality real. The story we have today about Thomas shows what I mean. Thomas is told by the other disciples that they have “seen the Lord.” To which he responds, "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." Now if we just left things at Easter, Thomas would still be sitting around not believing. But here on this low Sunday Jesus comes to Thomas and says, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." It is in this mundane time that Thomas comes to a full faith. I don’t know if it is because of Hollywood or perhaps the revivalist movement but we tend to forget about the ordinary/mundane times in which so much gets done.

In the military I end up spending time around a lot of Baptists and central to much of their understanding of their own faith is the conversion story. The basic structure of it is that they were a sinner one moment and a moment later they were saved. Now, it may be a personal fault of mine but I never had such an experience. My faith journey went from being mediocre Christian to being a mediocre atheist followed by a return to mediocre Christian and now hopefully to being a reasonably good Christian (although my wife might tell you otherwise). But in all of these it was more like the tide coming in and going out than it was like a light switch. However, I think the forty days speak to the idea that change takes time. Many of the disciples witnessed the Resurrection and others like Thomas were told about it, but it would take a long time before they came to grasp the reality of what it meant. It will be a month and a half before we celebrate Pentecost which is commonly called the birthday of the Church. God’s work on us takes time. Our spiritual lives are more akin to a tree that is planted than it is to a cup of instant coffee.

Speaking of trees, a few years ago, Amy and I planted a maple tree in our back yard (well technically we paid someone to plant a maple tree in our backyard). For its first year it looked like a stick with a few leaves on it. A month or so ago I was looking out our bedroom window, which is on the second floor, and commented to Amy that the tree was now as high as the second floor. It is still far from being a massive specimen but it had come a long way from its days as a tall stick. And all of this happened in the day in and day out. And it happened so slowly that you would not notice any difference one day to the next. Barring some disease this process should continue in the mundane and regular time until finally it becomes a magnificent specimen. I know it can be frustrating growing and becoming closer to God because the progress does not seem like much when viewed in the day in and day out but think of the model we are given today where it took Jesus forty days to explain what happened in the moment of the Resurrection. The things that change us will take time.

We call this day Low Sunday but it might be better to call it something like regular Sunday because it is the type of Sunday where we spend most of our existence. And that is not a bad thing because a lot gets done on regular days. Regular days are where we grow and change. It may not be terribly exciting or make for good television but they are important days. In these days after Easter Jesus sanctified the ordinary times by staying in them in his resurrected form. And so if they are that important to God we should take them seriously as well so that we may be transformed into his likeness day in and day out this day and forevermore.