
JESUS HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD**Sermon for the 2nd Sunday of Easter, 2018****John 20:19-31**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is taken from John 20:19-31: ¹⁹ **That Sunday evening the doors had been locked where the disciples were, because they were afraid of the Jews. Then Jesus came, stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you!”**

²⁰ **After He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.**

²¹ **Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you.”**

²² **After He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit! ²³ If you forgive any people’s sins, they have been forgiven; if you retain any people’s sins, they have been retained.”**

²⁴ **However, Thomas, one of the twelve, who was called “The Twin,” was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.”**

He told them, “Unless I see the marks of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the marks of the nails and put my hand into His side, I shall certainly not believe.”

²⁶ **A week later, His disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors had been locked, Jesus came, stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”**

²⁷ **Next He told Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at My hands! Take your hand and put it into My side! Stop your unbelief and believe!”**

²⁸ **Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!”**

²⁹ **Jesus asked him, “Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!”**

³⁰ **Jesus also performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which have not been written in this book. ³¹ However, these**

things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life in His name.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The disciples were born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the New Testament Church was established. Before the events of Holy Week, it was only in its *stages of formation* and with the dramatic events of the crucifixion of its Leader on Good Friday it seemed as if it would die out. There just seemed to be no life in it. Then the resurrected Lord appeared, and He put new life into the Church. It began at a tremendous pace. How? By Jesus. He put new life into the Church when He demonstrated to all that He died and rose from the dead.

On that first Easter day the whole world stood in dire need of a new life. Picture for yourself that Easter Sunday morning in Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate is having breakfast in his fortress with his wife Claudia, who may have been very nervous and gloomy, protesting that the dream she had about Jesus¹ should have induced Pilate to set Him free. Maybe Pilate himself was in a solemn mood and was thinking something like: *“This man they called Jesus was innocent and really should not have been punished as He was, anyhow, even if He was innocent, the matter is finished now.”*

Not very far away we find the chief priests of the Jews assembled for morning prayer, when the guards who are supposed to be guarding the tomb come bursting in with the report of the earthquake and the appearance of the angel. Worst of all they report that the tomb is empty. The priests are visibly shaken, but their crafty old leader, Caiaphas, quickly composes himself and takes charge. He hands each guard some money and commands them not to be so foolish as to believe that dead men wake up. He tells them, *“Say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him while we were sleeping!’¹⁴ If the governor hears about it, we shall persuade him and keep you out of trouble.”* (Matt. 28:13-14).

¹ Matthew 27:19

Wherever you look, things were dead that morning. Pilate's household, the imagination of the chief priests, and even the disciples. They too needed livening up. We surely sympathise with them. We cannot say that they did right in forgetting the promises of Jesus that He would rise, but we must consider the human element in them. It's alright for us who live in the light of what took place after Good Friday and after Easter Sunday to say these men shouldn't have been so discouraged that their Leader was dead. We live in the time when writers like St. Paul in the New Testament has given us a deeper understanding of the meaning of the resurrection, but it was a little different for the disciples. They did not want to be unbelievers - they loved their Lord - and they expected great things of Him, now all their hopes appeared to be dashed. Their world had fallen to pieces around them and they were in the depths of despair. On the Friday all but Peter and John fled into hiding,² but now, we see these despondent men, minus Judas and Thomas, gathered together on the First Easter.

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the doors had been locked where the disciples were, because they were afraid of the Jews. In a confused and fearful state of mind, those that had gathered that evening behind locked doors were worried that those same Jews who crucified Jesus would turn against them. They didn't feel safe.

On Easter morning, Mary Magdalene with some other women had visited the tomb of Jesus, where they found the stone removed and the grave empty. Mary hastened away and found Peter and John and told them the story. The two men didn't waste a minute but broke into a run to get to the tomb. Although John ran faster and arrived first, he stopped at the entryway, stooped down to look in, and saw Jesus' grave clothes lying there. Along came Peter, who rushed straight into the tomb, as impetuous and bold as we have come to expect.

There inside, where John followed shortly, they saw the linen cloths in which Jesus' body had been wrapped. Also, they saw the cloth from around Jesus' head, folded and lying separate from the others. It was not the scene we would expect if John were describing the results of a grave robbery. Things were too neat, and why would robbers have taken the time to leave the grave wrappings behind?

² Matthew 26:56

When John saw the signs, he believed. Here was evidence that Jesus had risen as He predicted. Still, neither disciple then fully realised that they were witnessing the fulfillment of Scripture which says, *For You will not abandon My soul to Sheol, or allow Your Faithful One to see decay*, (Psalm 16:10), and *Peter went away, wondering to himself about what had happened*, (Luke 24:12).

Sometime during the first Easter day the women found time to tell most of the disciples all that they had seen; but they did not all believe it at first. Luke 24:11 says, *“However, these words seemed like nonsense to the Eleven, and they would not believe them.”* It is difficult to follow the exact events of that day, but as a result of all the different reports of Jesus being alive, the disciples had come together in the evening to talk over all the different reports of exciting events. While they were assembled **Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you!”** By this time a slight ray of hope had arisen in the hearts of the disciples. They had heard the reports, one of them, Peter,³ had seen Jesus alive, and so they were now trying to convince themselves that the events of Good Friday were only a horrible nightmare and that Jesus would be restored to them. Even though this may have been the case, their hope was not very strong - their faith was faltering for St. Luke says that when Jesus stood before them *“they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost,”* (Luke 24:37). People in those days generally believed that the souls of the dead were able to roam the earth. There was a great fear of ghosts. However, it was unthinkable that a dead person could make bodily appearances. Yet that is exactly what Jesus did: with His glorified body He appears to Mary Magdalene, to Peter, to the Emmaus disciples, and to the group that has assembled here. His greeting is the familiar **“Peace be with you!”** It is a word they all need to hear, for they are understandably filled with fear.

In His goodness, Jesus did not leave them troubled for too long. Without any request on the apostles’ part **He showed them His hands and His side**. In doing this, Jesus demonstrated to these men that His resurrection was a fact, with the result that they were fully satisfied for **“they were glad when they**

³ Luke 24:34

saw the Lord.” The disciples rejoiced. Who can imagine that joy? Who can reproduce that scene? It was the Lord, alive!

The next demonstration by Jesus that He had risen from the dead in order to restore life and hope to these followers is shown a week later. Sometime during the week of Easter, the disciples had met Thomas and, in their excitement, told him what they had seen and heard: that Jesus was alive and that they had heard Him speak and had even seen the wounds of His body. But Thomas was a sceptic. In spite of the evidence of these witnesses whom he knew and surely should have trusted, he says: **“Unless I see the marks of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the marks of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I shall certainly not believe.”**

Now what about this character of Thomas? We usually call him doubting Thomas. This one event has given Thomas a bad name, and a bad name usually haunts a man like a shadow often for a lifetime, and so, we may do Thomas an injustice. He certainly had his faults, but he also must have had some good qualities for which he was chosen as one of the twelve. Thomas is the kind of man of whom there are many in the world. He just would not accept things off hand straight away. He was dominated by thought and needed explanations for the facts of faith. We must respect the feelings of men who sometimes have agony of soul in coming to a conviction that satisfies the mind and the heart. Some have to go on following the dictates of a hungry soul and mind for a long time before they have a firm conviction in their heart. Thomas wasn't trying to be different from other people - he wanted to believe but first he would make sure.

When the disciples spoke to Thomas he was happy to meet with them on the Sunday night. So, ²⁶ **a week later, His disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them.** Perhaps they were coming together to talk over the wonderful events - and of course such a meeting was an invitation for Jesus to appear.

If the disciples were expecting Jesus to appear, then they were not disappointed. **Although the doors had been locked, Jesus came, stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”**

After His usual greeting Jesus turned His attention to Thomas. He knew what was going on in the soul of Thomas. He knew the conditions Thomas had set

up, namely touching Jesus' wounds. Without any preliminaries Jesus challenges Thomas by saying: "*Thomas, you want to be able to SEE that I have risen from the dead. You want a visible demonstration of my resurrection?* Then **put your finger here and look at My hands! Take your hand and put it into My side! Stop your unbelief and believe!**" That was enough. Thomas didn't have to examine further. He confessed his faith in Jesus: "**My Lord and my God!**"

Jesus then gently chides Thomas for his doubt in the face of the best of testimony, "**Have you believed because you have seen Me?**" In other words, Jesus told Thomas that he could not deny such evidence. But Jesus continued: "**Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!**" Jesus means that genuine Easter faith does not depend on bodily experience of the resurrected Lord, but *faith* which believes this as true without bodily proof, is especially blessed.

So, we have two demonstrations here by Jesus that He had risen from the dead, and it is in the light and blessing and power of these demonstrations that the apostles are now commissioned by Jesus to carry on Christ's work.

Not only Thomas but also all the disciples had received the blessing of the Lord. When He appeared to them He greeted them with the words: "**Peace be with you!**" On Jesus' lips this meant that there was no reason for the disciples to fear. Everything had been done for them. God had been reconciled. The door of heaven now stood open waiting for them. His resurrection had shown them that He had the power to send them on their way to do His wonderful work. Instead of being dead with fear they now were to be alive in God's work having been quickened by Jesus' resurrection.

²¹ **Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you."**

²² **After He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit! ²³ If you forgive any people's sins, they have been forgiven; if you retain any people's sins, they have been retained."** Jesus commissioned His disciples to carry this message of peace to the whole world.

"As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you." On that Sunday evening, by giving the Holy Spirit, Jesus was equipping the disciples for the

ongoing work assigned to them, including especially the exercise of the Office of the Keys. The disciples were given the authority to forgive sins, and to administer the sacraments publicly in the local congregation. They were to be “shepherds,” “elders,” “overseers,” “pastors.” Jesus Christ established the pastoral office, where working through this office, through called men, the resurrected Christ would now offer the free forgiveness to a world drowning in sin. The gift of the Spirit as here made by Jesus was to enable the disciples to exercise the right, authority, and power with which He now clothes them in their sending.

Christ offers free forgiveness of sins today through Word and Sacrament, and that is why He has established His Church. We live in a world today that is far from peaceful, a world that sorely needs the peace of Jesus. As redeemed children of God, we have a powerful message that can bring peace to troubled consciences. Jesus the resurrected Lord can make it possible for all to have true peace. Every single one of us has the privilege of inviting people into God’s house to hear the wonderful message of redemption gained for all by Christ’s death and resurrection. After all, there is no doubt that mankind desperately need this Gospel. All are sinners who fall short of the glory of God⁴ – all are sinners who need Christ to speak His absolution to us. We need His precious forgiveness - not just a reminder that once upon a time we were forgiven. We need Him to give us the Word of forgiveness over and over - His real, powerful, faith-sustaining Word. We need to be nourished by His body and blood, given for us.

This is the mission of the Church. The Church is not dead but alive and God wants its members who have been quickened by the Spirit to let the world know that peace is possible for them - peace with God; peace in man’s own soul because he knows he has full forgiveness; peace in man’s soul because he knows the future has been made safe for him.

Dear friends, we all belong to that group of whom Jesus says that they have not seen Jesus in the flesh. However, we have the convincing record of how He demonstrated His resurrection to His disciples who were so slow to believe, and this has been recorded for us that we may believe that Jesus is the

⁴ Romans 3:23

Son of God, the risen Saviour - and believing in Him we may have everlasting life.⁵ Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

God of all grace, mercy, and peace, we praise You that, by raising Jesus from the dead, You have shown that He is Your Son, and our Saviour. We praise You also that our faith stands on the fulfilment of the prophecies about Him in the Old Testament Scriptures, and on the sure record of the apostles as eyewitnesses of the risen Lord. Give us also the witness of Your Spirit that we may firmly believe Your saving truth.

We thank You for the precious gift of eternal life in Your Son. Protect us from the deceptions of the world about us and enable us to hold firmly to the faith we profess. Deliver us from doubt and despair. Prevent us from being deceived by worthless human wisdom. Fill us with the Spirit of truth and the mind of Christ.

We thank You for Your holy Word. Give us the earnest desire to grow in Your saving truth during our pilgrimage on this earth. Though we see our risen Lord only with the eyes of faith, teach us to love Him, and to rejoice in Him. Keep us in His love that we may at the last receive the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls, and take part in the restoration of all things and the refreshment that it will bring.

Bless Your Church, that it may speak out the Gospel of our risen Saviour faithfully, and with courage and zeal.

Hear the prayers of all who need Your special help and favour. Assure them that You continue to be merciful. When, in Your deep wisdom, You permit any of us to suffer illness or other distress, comfort us, and assure us that You will not allow us to be tested beyond what we are able to bear. Strengthen us to endure hardship to Your glory and to our own spiritual blessing.

⁵ John 3:15

Strengthen the doubting and the faithless. Bring back the forgetful and the straying. Give us Your peace as we go out from here today. All this we pray in the name of Jesus, our risen Lord. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 4:32-35

³² The large number of believers was one in heart and soul, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but they possessed everything in common. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to give testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great good will rested on them all.

³⁴ For there was no one among them who was in need. For all who possessed pieces of land or houses used to sell them, bring the proceeds of the things that were sold ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet. These used to be distributed to each one according to the need he had.

1 John 1:1-2:2

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of Life ² and the Life has been revealed; and we have seen It, testify to It and proclaim to you the eternal Life that was with the Father and that has been

revealed to us. ³ What we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is also with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things that our joy may be complete.

⁵ This is the message that we have heard from Him and that we are telling you: that God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we are lying and not practising the truth.

⁷ However, 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 that we have no sin, we are deceiving 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 that we have not sinned, we are making Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

¹ My little children, I am writing this to you that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the propitiation for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the doors had been locked where the disciples were, because they were afraid of the Jews. Then Jesus came, stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you!"

²⁰ After He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you."

²² After He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit! ²³ If you forgive any people's sins, they have been forgiven; if you retain any people's sins, they have been retained."

²⁴ However, Thomas, one of the twelve, who was called "The Twin," was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."

He told them, "Unless I see the marks of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the marks of the nails and put my hand into His side, I shall certainly not believe."

²⁶ A week later, His disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors had been locked, Jesus came, stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

²⁷ Next He told Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at My hands! Take your hand and put it into My side! Stop your unbelief and believe!"

²⁸ Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus asked him, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!"

³⁰ Jesus also performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which have not been written in this book. ³¹ However, these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life in His name.