

## ***SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER***

*Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 118:14-29 or 150; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31*

Well, here we are again on Thomas Sunday. Good old doubting Thomas. He couldn't believe the disciples' story about having seen Jesus alive; he needed proof; he needed to be sure.

Jesus says to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." That includes us gathered here today.

We didn't make it to the empty tomb, we didn't see the angels, we didn't hear Jesus call us by name in the garden. We weren't in the upper room with the other disciples when they got to see Jesus.

When we hear the Gospel stories, we sometimes identify with the characters in them. In this story, most all of us, whether we are willing to admit it or not, are like Thomas. We have doubts.

We want proof.

Most of us long for accuracy in the stories about Jesus, so that we can feel that we have that proof, that all the witnesses are in agreement, so that we can know that this is exactly what happened. We long for that neat and tidy package that will build our faith, help us believe when we're in a crisis, and keep us going over the long haul of discipleship.

However, often what we get from the Gospel accounts are stories filled with conflicting accounts. Some people see only the empty tomb, some see one angel, some see two angels, some see Jesus, some talk with Jesus, some only recognize Jesus when He breaks the bread. Everyone seems to have been caught off

guard by the resurrection. The disciples don't seem to be able to capture their experience with any accuracy, they can't seem to get the facts straight. They always seem surprised by Jesus' appearances. They seem to struggle to deal with how resurrection works. Yet Jesus comes to them in their fear, their confusion, and their doubts, and greets them with "Peace be with you". He even makes a return visit the next week so that Thomas can experience the resurrection first hand.

It is important for us to remember that Jesus does not come to the disciples in a blaze of glory, surrounded by angels, or accompanied by blasting trumpets. Rather, He comes quietly; He seems to surprise the disciples. And He comes with His wounds, the wounded Savior coming to His wounded disciples.

He is not all neat and tidy, but still bears the marks of His suffering, the marks of His humanity. Even His resurrected body still shows the signs of His dwelling among us.

As humans, we struggle to hide our woundedness as a sign of weakness, yet the risen Christ still bears His woundedness and comes to meet us and bring us His peace. His resurrection gives us hope that we will be healed and made whole. When the risen Lord came to the disciples in the upper room, He brought them His peace, He breathed His Spirit on them, and commissioned them to go into all the world, to live and preach His message of love, forgiveness, and peace.

In the creation story, God molded Adam out of the clay and breathed life into him. In the upper room, Jesus breathes the restoring life of God into the disciples, making them new people and, through them, offering new life to the world. The very fact that we are here today, continuing to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, is a powerful witness to the power of the Spirit, present in the disciples, and in the church throughout the ages.

This isn't just a short story frozen in time in that upper room in Jerusalem; it is Gospel, good news, that goes beyond time and place. Whenever we practice forgiveness, whenever we overcome the power of death in its many forms: hatred, violence, indifference; the spirit of Christ is alive and well in believers, and resurrection life is expressed again in this time and place. We can't "prove" the resurrection, but we can be fingers pointing to it, whenever we are signs that the life of Christ has not been extinguished, but is alive and well in us, and in every Christian community.

Jesus' appearance to Thomas reminds us that doubts do not disqualify us from being disciples. Jesus says to Thomas, and to us, "Do not doubt, but believe". We need to keep reminding ourselves that doubt isn't the opposite of faith; rather it is an element of faith. The fact is that if we don't have any doubts, we're either kidding ourselves, or always asleep.

At the very beginning of the Gospel of John, the author proclaims that, through Jesus, God has brought life and light to the world. In the death of Jesus on the cross, it appeared that the powers of darkness were stronger than the power of light, that darkness had overcome the light.

Through the resurrection, we are shown that the light still shines.

Jesus commissioned the disciples to continue His work, to spread His light throughout the world. Their future changed through Christ's gift of the Spirit. In our baptism we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and made Christ's own forever. We are presented with a candle to show that we have passed from darkness to light. We, too, have a new future because of Christ's resurrection. We, too, have been commissioned to spread the light of Christ.

On this Sunday in April, when the world outside our doors has

put away the baskets and the Easter bunnies, and moved on, we continue to be challenged to live as though the resurrection really does illuminate our lives. We are challenged to reach out and embrace the future in faith, believing that the light of the resurrection will enable us to make our way in the world. We are challenged to seek peace and reconciliation, knowing it is the work of Christ and the Church.

Most of all, we are challenged to remember that while we may look at ourselves and see only doubting Thomases, God looks at us and sees the best: God sees beloved children, faithful friends, spirit-filled partners in the ongoing work of creation. Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

**AMEN.**