

**10.00 PE – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2010**  
**Easter 2 – Year C**

Acts 5: 27-32  
Revelation 1: 4-8  
John 20: 19 – end

Well, here we are again on Thomas Sunday. Good old doubting Thomas, who could be the patron saint of so many modern people. Thomas was reported to have been a twin, maybe even an identical twin - as such, he would have known all about mistaken identity. He would have known how easy it is to be wrong about something, even when we see it with our own eyes. He just couldn't take the other disciples' word about having seen Jesus alive. He needed to be sure. Thomas needed proof.

Jesus says to Thomas, "**Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.**" Just like Thomas, we didn't make it to the empty tomb. We didn't see the angels, and we didn't hear Jesus call us by name in the garden. We weren't in the upper room with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them. When we hear the gospel stories, we sometimes identify with the characters in them. Are we like Peter, overcome by fears when things get tough? Could we be strong like the women who stayed with Jesus, despite the cost? Maybe. But most of us, I think, are rather 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 - all the witnesses to be in agreement as to exactly what happened. Some of us create that neat and tidy bundle in our heads, but many of us only manage to produce a package that looks like it was wrapped by an inexperienced buffoon. Yet we long for that neat and tidy package that will build up our faith, to help us believe when we're in a crisis, and keep us going over the long haul of discipleship.

At the end of our Lent Course, in Holy Week, we all agreed that we each had in our minds some amalgam of all the Passion stories. A mish mash of the four gospel accounts, which give us four different accounts of the Passion. And it is similar with the four accounts of the Resurrection. Some people see only the empty tomb, some see one angel or two, 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 experiences with any accuracy. 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. He comes - quietly. And he comes with his wounds - the wounded savior coming to his wounded disciples. He is not all neat and tidy. Even his resurrected body still shows the signs of his dwelling among us. As humans, we struggle to hide our wounds, often looking on them as a sign of weakness. But the risen Christ comes to meet us still bearing his wounds. But His resurrection gives us the hope that we will be 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 live and preach His message of love, forgiveness, and peace. As so often in the Bible, we come full circle, and return to the first creation, as told in Genesis. In the creation story, God moulded Adam out of 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. **I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come.** The beginning and the end. The very fact that we are here this morning, continuing to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, is testimony to the power of the Spirit present in those disciples, and in the church throughout the ages. This story isn't a painting, frozen in time in that upper room in Jerusalem. It is gospel. Good news that transcends both time and place.

We can't "**prove**" the resurrection, but we can be fingers pointing to it. We are the signs that the life of Christ has not been extinguished, but is within us, and in every Christian community through out the world. Whenever we practice forgiveness. Whenever we overcome the power of death in its many forms - hatred, violence, indifference. Then, we show that the spirit of Christ is alive and well in believers, and resurrection life is still expressed in this time and this place.

Also, as with doubting Thomas, Jesus' appearance reminds us, that doubts do not disqualify us from discipleship. Jesus says to Thomas, and to us: **Do not doubt, but believe.** The theologian Paul Tillich said that doubt is not the opposite of faith; rather it is an element of faith. And a Presbyterian pastor and writer, Frederick Buechner, puts it in more basic terms. He said, that if we don't have any doubts, we're either kidding ourselves, or we're asleep. He characterizes doubts as "**the ants in the pants**" of faith - they keep it awake and moving.

At the very beginning of John's Gospel, 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 darkness had overcome the light. But 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, and in our baptism, we are sealed by the same Holy Spirit, and made Christ's own forever. And we too are commissioned to spread the light of Christ, and are given a candle, lit from the Easter candle, to remind us of that job.

A contemporary theologian, Marjorie Suchocki, asks us to think about the resurrection through the metaphor of the sun. She says: **"We cannot look directly at the sun, for the brightness would blind us - our eyes are not suited to that strength of light. Yet the sun, which we cannot see directly, illuminates all else, and in its light we make our way in the world."** She goes on to say that the resurrection **"illuminates the entire landscape of the New Testament. The resurrection is the confirmation of that which Jesus revealed in his life and death. And it is the catalyst that transformed the disciples, releasing the power that led to the foundation of the church."**

On this April morning, when the world outside our doors has put away the eggs and bunnies of Easter, and has 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, believing that the light of the resurrection will enable us to make our way in the darkened world around us. We are challenged to seek peace and reconciliation, knowing that this is the work of Christ and of his Church. And 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 His ongoing work of creation.

Amen.