



Greeting and announcements

Sharing our Joys and Concerns

Welcome in the Name our Lord Jesus Christ; Who was, Who is, and Who will come

April 11, 2021 The Second Sunday of Easter: Thank you, Thomas!, and all the witnesses

**Prelude: It is No Secret What God Can Do**      **Stuart Hamblen**

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Eternal and powerful God, You have been our hope on our journey of faith. Raise us up to a new life like you did with the Disciples of Jesus. By the power of Your Holy Spirit turn our doubts into unshakable belief in Your victory over all things, even over death. You have sent us an Advocate, Jesus, who helps us overcome our fears and our doubts so we can live new lives of joy and peace. Reach out to us and let us feel Your love for us, even on this day.

During this time of worship, center our hearts, our souls, and our minds on Your Presence with us as we lift to you the prayers of our hearts. We know You promise to hear our prayers, always, and with confidence we come to pray for...

Our Church, for it's leaders and congregation

Our world and our country

Our loved ones - keep them: keep them in health, in safety, in comfort, in Your care. Keep us, also and send forth Your Holy Spirit of truth, of comfort, and of power.

We pray for any among us who feel constrained, or emotionally distressed by our time and era and for any who need to know Your love for them in this hurting world.

We also lift to You those who need comfort as they mourn their loved ones. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, The comforter, who would remind us of Your promises that Nothing in life, or in death, things present, nor things to come, nor angels or demons within our lives, nor anything in all of creation will ever be able to separate us from Your love in Jesus the Christ, our Lord.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and power and the glory forever. Amen**

### **Opening Hymn: Christ is Risen! Shout Hosanna! No. 307, vs. 1,2**

1. Christ is risen! Shout Hosanna! Celebrate this day of days. Christ is risen! Hush in wonder; all creation is amazed. In the desert all surrounding, see, a spreading tree has grown. Healing leaves of grace abounding bring a taste of love unknown.
2. Christ is risen! Raise your spirits from the caverns of despair. Walk with gladness in the morning. See what love can do and dare. Drink the wine of resurrection, not a servant, but a friend; Jesus is our strong companion. Joy and peace shall never end.

Call to Worship adapted from Psalm 111 (Pastor Sue and Walt Theobald)

Pastor: Praise the Lord!

**People: We thank the Lord with all our hearts.**

Pastor: The works of the Lord are magnificent;

**People: We treasure our advocate, The Lord!**

Pastor: God's deeds are majestic and glorious;

**People: God's righteousness stands forever.**

Pastor: The Lord is full of mercy and compassion.

**People: God remembers God's covenant forever.**

### **Choral Anthem**

## Unison Prayer:

**Compassionate God, who raised Jesus from the dead, remember us as we journey through this barren land where we sometimes miss Your actions in our lives. We, like Thomas, see and hear the victory shouts of others who have witnessed Your abiding presence and power in their lives, but are reluctant to believe in miracles that would change our understanding and trust in Your amazing power. Send Your Holy Spirit to remind us that Jesus and Your Spirit are advocates for us in our journey of faith. Show us the truth that Jesus blessed us, who have not seen his resurrection presence, but live by faith day, by day. Thank you for Your gracious love for us, even when we stray from Your presence and ways. Grant us the ability to see You working in our lives so we, too, like Thomas and the Disciples, can believe in Jesus with our entire being.**

New Testament Reading: 1 John 1: 1-2:2

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— 3 we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 We are writing these things so that our[a] joy may be complete.

## God Is Light

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; 7 but if we walk in the light as he himself 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 deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

## Christ Our Advocate

2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. NRSV

Gospel Reading: John 20: 19-31

## Jesus Appears to the Disciples

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

## Jesus and Thomas

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “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.” 26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

## The Purpose of This Book

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may come to believe[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. NRSV

Pastor: This is the word of God for the people of God.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

Message: Thank you, Thomas!, and all the witnesses

I never get tired of reading and telling the story about Thomas after the resurrection of Jesus. I can identify with Thomas—always in the wrong place, at the wrong time, missing what others were witnessing about God’s amazing power within their lives and faith. He is where we get the term: Doubting Thomas—someone who doubts in the face of others proclaiming a truth that is evident to everyone else. Have you ever felt “out of step,” where other believers seem to be? Trust me, Thomas gives us great hope when we feel that way.

First, this story about Thomas shows us that Jesus and God can transcend any doubts we may have about Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection. It actually gives us hope in the face of our doubts, any doubts we may have about Jesus and God working in our lives. Someone pointed out Garth Brook’s song “Unanswered Prayers” one Sunday, saying my sermon brought that song to mind. It’s about how we may think God isn’t working within our lives because God didn’t answer our prayers the way we THOUGHT God should have answered them. That’s us, and probably Thomas at the beginning of our Gospel story.

Thomas had probably expected Jesus to be the Reigning King-God’s anointed Messiah in the land of Israel. Instead, Thomas, like the other Disciples, saw Jesus put to death by the Roman government. His hopes for the future were probably squashed in the reality he had witnessed. Then in his time of grief and despair, others around him were Joyous and flying off the walls with Excitement and giddy happy news: Jesus is ALIVE!!

Have you ever been in Thomas’ shoes of grief, and yet, others around you are cheering and happy with news you just couldn’t wrap your mind around. See, I can relate to Thomas. This is why I love

our Gospel writer John. He gives me places where I can see myself living the real lives of people living in the reality of this world, moving toward an understanding that God does, and can overturn the dynamics in our lives by God's power and Kingdom.

There are two things we, who live now, in 2021 receive from this passage. Two promises that we get as believers in the Resurrection of Jesus: First, the blessing that we get when Jesus proves to Thomas he was the real Jesus, alive, with the wounds that Thomas was able to touch—Jesus pronounces: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” We have been given a Blessing by Jesus, himself!

The second blessing or promise is the promise of peace and the Holy Spirit. When the risen Christ showed up among the Disciples he said “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Jesus is continually sending peace and the Holy Spirit to those who would follow him. We are recipients of what Jesus is faithful to do for his followers.

I often try to convey the truth that God and Jesus never change. Ever! When we talk about the Trinity, God, Jesus, and The Holy Spirit, we talk about how all of them are the same—what one will do, the others do, what one doesn't do, the others don't do. I've given the illustration of water, ice, and steam. But another way to look at it is the person of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. A person can be a parent, at the same time being a brother, and at another time a great friend—all the same person, but in different roles that don't change who the person is. That's God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We can count on all of them to do what they do in the lives of believers.

John, our Gospel writer, makes it clear why he is writing these things down for us. John writes: But these are written so that you may come to believe[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. John wants us, those of us who live now, in 2021 to experience and know the power of God and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in our lives like the Disciples and even Thomas experienced in that day when they experienced the risen Christ in their midst. John wants us to believe and be transformed by the resurrection power of God in our lives, as profoundly as they had on that unbelievable day of days.

John wants us to know that all things are possible with God, there are no limits to God's love, or grace toward us as believers. John writes so we can acknowledge the truth about our own journey of faith with its ups and downs, like the Disciples had in theirs. Even in 1 John we are encouraged to be honest about our ability to stray in our journey with God. It is by God's power we have faith, and are strengthened in our faith journey.

God's actions are always faithful and loving so we can grow in our understanding of God's power over all things in our lives. Our problem is that we, like Thomas, wrap ourselves in a protective shell that we think will safeguard us from disappointments. We want blessings, but we sometimes have an understanding of what a “blessing should look like,” and we can't seem to grasp the concept of God's kingdom truths that others are trying to tell us about. And yet, we can thank Thomas—because of him we get a blessing when we attempt to believe in the risen Christ, Jesus.

You have been reminded that Jesus Christ is your Lord and that you are God's servants- you are loved -you are forgiven -and you are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live as God's faithful ones in this world.

**Closing Hymn: We Walk by Faith No. 2196, FWS vs. 1,2,3**

1. We walk by faith, and not by sight: No gracious words we hear \_\_\_\_ of him who spoke as none e're spoke, but we believe him near.
2. We may not touch his hands and side, nor follow where he trod; \_\_\_\_ yet in his promise we rejoice, and cry "My Lord and God!"
3. Help then, O Lord, our unbelief, and may our faith abound; \_\_\_\_ to call on you when you are near, and seek where you are found.

\*Benediction: (Pastor Sue and Kathy Demo)

Pastor: We like Thomas, need the grace of Christ to believe in God's power over all things.

**People: We leave this worship knowing that God is present through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.**

Pastor: We can rejoice, like the original followers of Jesus, in God's amazing victory.

**People: Praise be to God that even our unbelief God acknowledges with grace and understanding.**

Pastor: We are recipients of blessings and peace through the actions and grace of Jesus the Christ.

**People: Praise be to Jesus, who knows our lives in this world.**

Pastor: We are asked, by God and Jesus, to receive the Holy Spirit into our lives.

**People: Praise be to the Holy Spirit for working within us to be able to see God, Jesus, and The Holy Spirit working in and around us.**

Pastor: Jesus sends us out to make disciples for Christ, for the transformation of the world;

**People: Praise be for the mission and ministry God has prepared for us.**

**Postlude: Come Away to the Skies**

**Michael Larkin**