

SERMON – Easter 2 2022

TEXT: John 20:19-31

Grace, mercy and peace be yours this day and always from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Every year on this Sunday it is the same...we run right into the dilemma of Thomas...or is it the dilemma of Jesus...wait, maybe it is the dilemma of the 11 (or however many people were in the room behind the closed and locked doors).

We hear Jesus say to the disciples: “Peace be with you”. John tells us how the Holy Spirit, God’s presence with the believers, was shared by Jesus then...not just on Pentecost. Jesus tells those who were present that they have the ability to forgive sins. A lot is happening!

However, what is it in this reading from John’s Gospel that has become part of our vocabulary? “**Doubting Thomas**” I suspect some folk who make use of this two word phrase don’t even know where it came from, or who this Thomas is.

OK then, we have this phrase before us...but what about other times when Thomas is mentioned in this Gospel? Do you remember the other times when Thomas spoke up in the midst of the disciples? Possibly not...so let me refresh our memories.

The first time Thomas is recorded as speaking up is in John 11:16. Jesus has made the decision to go to Bethany where Lazarus has died. This trip may not have found universal acceptance among the disciples...were they afraid about what might happen...Lazarus was dead, would Jesus be next? Thomas speaks up, “Let us also go, that we may die with him”. Thomas is brave, facing what might occur, yet probably not knowing how close to the truth he is.

Thomas is the one disciple who speaks honestly with Jesus in John chapter 14, verse 5. Jesus speaks with the disciples --- preparing them...familiar words “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

After three years traveling with Jesus, I can just see the disciples nodding their heads in agreement....but wondering what it meant. Thomas speaks up: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Thomas is honest..."I don't understand, Jesus....tell me more". How many of the other disciples breathed a sigh of relief that someone asked the question that was on their minds too?

And then we come to today's text. Again Thomas is honest...not simply accepting what the others tell him, he again bravely speaks up...Thomas is a seeker looking for proof.

Thomas is really brave, honest and seeking...And he is "Thomas the practical".

Thomas meets Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, a week after the other disciples. And, Thomas exclaims "My Lord and my God!" This is not an exclamation of doubt, but a shout of faith. Nothing could hold Thomas back from this....

Christ is Risen.....Christ is Risen, Indeed....Alleluia!

In the reading from Acts, the apostles again are standing before the high priest, not for the first time, because they were teaching in Jesus' name. They tell the authorities, "We must obey God rather than any human authority". They tell the authorities that they are witnesses...they speak out in faith!

"My Lord and my God!" Not doubting Thomas...but believing Thomas...Thomas the witness...Thomas who has life in Jesus' name.

And this brings me to the conclusion of today's Gospel text....these are words we are to take into our hearts...words to be heard...words to be lived: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."

Amen and Amen!

Christ is risen....Christ is risen indeed....Alleluia!