

## Peace Be With You

**Let Us Pray:** Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!!!

Welcome to the second Sunday of Easter. You will notice that through the season of Easter we will leave the Old Testament behind. Where we usually have a lesson reading from the old testament the reading will be from Acts in the New Testament. We are Easter people . We are witnesses of the risen Lord who conquered death. We witnessed his victory last week with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary when the angel of the Lord told them that Jesus had been raised from the dead. He has won the victory over death for us. We are Easter People.

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

In our Church liturgy, the second Sunday of Easter, we always have the Gospel reading from Saint John, Chapter 20: 19-31. Poor Thomas will always be called doubting Thomas. It has come to have a negative connotation, Thomas as well as doubting.

There is a background to the Gospel of John. Theologians believe that it was written by an unknown person 70-90 years after Jesus was crucified. They believe that this person was not a witness to the crucifixion, but lived in a community that was being persecuted by the Romans. This was after the Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem and Jews were scattered to far corners of the Empire. The Romans were throwing Christians to the lions. Christians were afraid.

People were struggling to believe because they were not there to see Jesus. They did not see Him teach, heal, and offer love to the outcast and face the religious leaders with new interpretations of their old ideas. They

were struggling to understand what kind of Messiah Jesus really was. They were still being persecuted by the people that had put him on a cross and crucified him, while letting a criminal go free. How could they rationalize this in their minds and not have questions?

So, this unknown writer tells these doubting people about the disciples who knew Jesus. They had just witnessed His crucifixion and resurrection. They were also afraid and also doubting. They were present with Jesus and had seen what he was able to do.

Doubt is not unbelief. I often think that we confuse this. Doubt is a lack of certainty or conviction. Unbelief is the lack of Faith. I am sure that although most of us; just like Thomas and the people that this Gospel was written for, have doubts, we still have faith. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. As believers in Jesus Christ we may phrase it as; Faith is confidence in Christ for what we hope for. His blessing in all areas of life that we do not now see.

I don't question the struggle of people who start to doubt their own faith, I think that many people do. Doubt leads people to seek answers. It does not mean they don't have Faith or believe. Doubt may make people look for a deeper understanding. Isn't that why we often go to a Bible Study, or read a book or come to church to hear a sermon? Doubt started me on my faith journey. My doubt was what I had learned from the world about my unworthiness. Some Christians had told me that because of some of my decisions that Jesus would not find me worthy to love. I had not lost my faith, I just needed a clearer vision. The more I learned the more I thirsted for the Word. The deeper the Peace that is Jesus grew in my heart. The Love that Jesus offers to me and to you became so important. It became a Love I must give to everyone. That we all must give to everyone.

I am sure that there was a lot of fear in that room. The disciples may not have admitted their doubt. Had they made the right decision to follow this man. They were now fugitives. Peter denied Jesus three times, and Judas , well he hung himself. Jesus foretold these things, and he also

foretold that he would not leave them alone. He would leave them with an advocate. He has left us with that same advocate.

Peace Be With You: Jesus tries to open the hearts of the disciples, to understand.

During the Last supper, John 14: 25-27, Jesus said;” But the Advocate , the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.” What Jesus foretold was fulfilled in the Gospel today.

Peace be with you, As the Father sent me so I send you. Jesus then breathed on them and said, “ Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

This is so important! As human beings we are all afraid at times. We all have doubts about our worthiness and we often feel alone in this world. Here ! Right Here! We Have heard the words.

Peace be With You! It is a peace beyond this world. A promise that. We are never alone. The Holy Spirit enters our hearts at our Baptism. We are handed over the care of God’s world and his children by a Risen Christ. We are all given this responsibility because Christ lived, he died and rose from the dead to win salvation and forgiveness for all people. God wants us, his Children, his people to proclaim his truths to the whole world. He has empowered us to declare to all people that their sins are fully and freely forgiven for Christ's sake.

We have the ability to offer others a Peace. A deep peace. As I said earlier, doubting is what brought me to Trinity. I doubted that God would accept a sinner like me. A divorced woman, with other sins in my life. I met a loving God here who told me I was forgiven.

It is okay to doubt, to question, and to still believe. I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. I have experienced it in the body of Christ that is the Church. Christ's hands today are our hands and we are the body of Christ, Christ lives through us. We believe though we have not seen.

Do you believe though you have not seen? I can say. Yes I believe!

So during this Season of Easter, as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, remember the Love and Forgiveness that he has asked us to share with the world. We are his disciples in this world and we have the Advocate that was provided at our baptism to help us. The Holy Spirit.

May You remember throughout the week that deep peace that we are offered beyond this world. The gift of eternal life with our risen Lord. Share that peace with the world so they may believe though they have not seen.

Peace be with you.

**Amen**