



Second Sunday of Easter, Year A

Missy Schroeder, Indiana-Kentucky Synod

Director for Evangelical Mission

Gospel Text - John 20:19-31

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, 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."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), 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."

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

SERMON TEXT:

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

Hello, my name is Missy Schroeder, and I have the privilege to serve as the Director for Evangelical Mission in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. I serve in this role as a lay leader, so shout out to all of you lay leaders in Region 6. I am grateful to have the opportunity to be with you today.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

As the Director for Evangelical Mission, this Gospel speaks deeply to my heart—and to the heart of my ministry. I wake up every morning thinking about one thing:
How do we share the love of Jesus?
How do we embody good news in a world that so desperately needs it?

And today's scriptures answer that question in such a beautiful, powerful way.

In Acts, Peter stands up and proclaims something astonishing. Jesus was killed—handed over by those outside the law. But God raised him up, freeing him from death, because it was impossible for death to hold him in its power.

Impossible.

“This Jesus God raised up,” Peter says, “and of that all of us are witnesses.”

That’s where evangelism begins.

Not with a program.

Not with pressure.

Not with perfection.

It begins with witness.

We are witnesses to the One death could not contain.

And Peter goes on: Jesus, exalted at the right hand of God, has received the promise of the Holy Spirit and has poured it out—this that you now see and hear.

Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit on us.

Psalm 16 echoes the result:

“My heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure... You show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy.”

Fullness of joy.
Security.
Life.

Then 1 Peter proclaims:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

A new birth into a living hope.

Nothing can take this away.

Faith—this gift from God—is more precious than gold.

Even though we have not seen him, we love him.

Even though we do not see him now, we believe—and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.

All of this leads us into that locked room in John’s Gospel.

The disciples are behind closed doors.

Afraid.

Anxious.

Unsure what comes next.

And honestly—who could blame them?

They had watched their friend, their teacher, their hope, be crucified. Fear makes sense.

And what does Jesus do?

He shows up in the midst of their fear.

He doesn't wait for them to get brave.
He doesn't wait for them to unlock the door.
He comes into the room.

"Peace be with you."

Then he shows them his hands and his side. He knows we need assurance. He knows we need to see the scars. This isn't denial of suffering. This is resurrection through suffering.

And then again:
"Peace be with you."

And then the sending:
"As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Not alone.
Not on your own strength.
Not by your own brilliance.

He breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The same Spirit poured out in Acts.
The same Spirit promised.
The same Spirit given to us in baptism.

This work always begins with God.

God sends Jesus.
Jesus sends us.
And the Holy Spirit empowers us.

Now Thomas wasn't there that first night.
And who could blame him?

He says what many of us might say: "Unless I see... unless I touch... I cannot believe."

What I find interesting is that Thomas wasn't there when the others received the breath of the Spirit.

And yet Jesus does not shame him.
Jesus does not dismiss him.
Jesus shows up again.

He meets Thomas exactly where he is.

He offers him what he needs.

And then he leaves the rest of us with a blessing:
"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

That's us.

So what do I notice in this Gospel?

Locked doors.
Fear.
Peace.
Breath.
Sending.
Meeting people where they are.

Jesus asks us to show up like he did—not with fear, but with love and compassion. Because we belong to the One whom the grave could not contain.

Evangelism is not about convincing.
It is about showing up.

It is about loving our neighbor.

Listening deeply.

Sharing life.

Sharing our story of the One who has shown up in our locked rooms—rooms of fear, anxiety, doubt, uncertainty, pain, grief—and has spoken peace.

We can trust something profound:

When we show up with love, Jesus will show up too.

We don't bring Jesus into people's lives.

He is already there.

We simply sit with others in their locked rooms—trusting that the One who conquered death will breathe peace upon them too.

As we continue to unlock our own doors—to let Jesus breathe forgiveness, grace, and mercy into our wounds—we build the capacity to sit with others in theirs.

This is reconciling work.

Bringing love.

Compassion.

Kindness.

Forgiveness.

Mercy.

Peace.

Into a world that is exhausted by division and desperate for hope.

We are equipped.

We have the Holy Spirit.

We have faith more precious than gold.

We have a living hope that cannot be taken away.

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Sent into your neighborhoods.

Sent into your workplaces.

Sent into your families.

Sent into everyday conversations.

Not with fear.

But with peace.

Not with pressure.
But with love.

Because God so loved the world that he gave his only Son—that we might have life, wholeness, healing, and joy.

Hallelujah. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Hallelujah.

Amen.

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