

IK Synod Sermon

4.24.2022

Second Sunday of Easter

Pastor Nancy Nyland, Director for Evangelical Mission

Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!

Christ is Risen Indeed!

Alleluia!

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 20th chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

19When 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." 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So 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."

26A 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." 27Then 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.” 28Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” 30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God, the Father and our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!
Christ is Risen Indeed!
Alleluia!

We continue our Easter celebration. Our celebration of Jesus’ triumph over death. Our celebration of the risen Christ, the one who appears to the fearful disciples who are hold up behind locked doors.

I grew up with one brother, he was older, but only by 16 months, so this didn’t intimidate me. My brother and I argued a lot, about a lot of things. This often happened when my mom and dad were not at home. I would tease and pick on my brother, egging him on, daring him to come after me. When I knew he was about to spring into action, I would run through the house, my brother close at my heels. I was headed for the bathroom. Why? Because the bathroom was the only room in the house that had a lock on the door. Behind that locked door, I felt safe. I could stay there a long time. Think of it, a bathroom, I had everything that I needed for a long stay, especially when I eventually learned to stash a few snacks under the towels and sheets in the linen

closet. Truth be told, I was afraid of my brother especially after I had stirred him up. But safely behind a locked door, I could wait for him to cool down.

It was evening on that day, that first Easter day, and the disciples were safely gathered behind locked doors. They were afraid. Afraid that their fate would be the same as their beloved Jesus — ridiculed, whipped, beaten, and hung on a cross to die.

Fearing the Jews, the disciples were safely tucked behind locked doors waiting. I wonder what they were waiting for. I am pretty sure that they were not waiting for the risen Jesus to join them behind those locked doors. But that is exactly what happened. No matter that the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

“Peace be with you.” Obviously, Jesus knew the fear that his disciples were facing. But I wonder if there was a new wave of fear when Jesus suddenly appeared right there in front of them. Yes, they certainly needed some peace, some time to process what was happening.

After Jesus greeted them with “Peace”, he showed them his hands and his side. At that point, they must have begun to put it all together, for scripture tells us that the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Their fear had turned into joy.

We often talk about Thomas being the doubting one in this story. But I think doubt and belief enter into this story at this first encounter between Jesus and the disciples in that room. Notice that it is after Jesus shows them his hands and his side that they rejoice, that they believe, that they trust.

The Greek word translated as believing in this biblical account can also carry the meaning of trusting in someone or something. Perhaps doubt and trust are an integral part of this first interaction between the disciples and the risen Jesus.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you.” As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Was this a reminder to the disciples of what they should be doing? Here the disciples are, crowded into a room, door locked, separated from the world, separated from other people. And Jesus says, as the Father has sent me, so I send you. Trust me, Jesus says, I send you out of this locked room, send you out of your fear, send you out into the world to share the good news that I, Jesus, have been raised from the dead, risen and alive right in front of your eyes.

When Jesus had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The disciples were not on their own. The promised Holy Spirit had been breathed upon them, entrusted to them. The Spirit would be with them to empower them as they went out into the world.

Obviously, the disciples did leave the room, for they encountered Thomas, the one who wasn’t with them that day. When they saw him, they told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But Thomas 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.”

There seems to be a couple of layers of trusting here. Thomas trusting that the disciples were telling the truth and Thomas trusting that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. He needed to see, in order to trust.

A week later when the disciples are again in the room together. This time not behind locked doors. This time not without Thomas. Jesus came again and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Then Jesus turned to Thomas and said, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Do not doubt, but trust, trust in me.

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" There it is — the belief, the trust, the deep relationship...my Lord and my God!

Sitting behind the locked door in the bathroom, I had to trust....trust that my brother had calmed down during the time I was in there; trust that he cared enough about me not to retaliate; trust in our relationship as brother and sister. I had to trust in order to overcome my fear and unlock the door and walk out.

What kind of locked doors do we sit behind in our lives? What barriers do we erect that separate us from the world and from other people? What doubts and fears limit us? What circumstances in life cause us to hold up in a safe space physically, mentally, emotionally?

Just as Jesus stood among the disciples in the midst of their doubt and fear and locked door. Jesus stands with you today. The good news is that we don't have to unlock the door and walk out. Jesus comes to us. No locked doors, no barriers we erect, no doubts or fears can keep Jesus away. Jesus joins us in the circumstances of life that cause us to hold up in safe spaces.

Jesus meets you, right where you are....in your uncertainty, in your weariness, in grief, in anger, in fear....in your battles with depression, disease, injustice, addiction, or bad choices.....in your feelings of

inadequacy or unworthiness. Jesus enters in, stands with you, and says, "Peace be with you."

"Peace be with you." This is a peace that passes human understanding. This is a peace that does not immediately take away all or any of our burdens, but a peace that comes from knowing and trusting that you carry no burden alone.

Jesus — our Lord and our God — enters in, bringing his presence of comfort, encouragement, rest, recovery, healing, love, grace and mercy. Jesus, the risen Jesus, enters in and breathes into us new life and peace. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!
Christ is Risen Indeed!
Alleluia!

Prayers of Intercession

Set free from captivity to sin and death, we pray to the God of resurrection for the church, people in need, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Holy One who acts righteously, equip your church as witnesses of your goodness to go and tell others of your abundant love, that they may believe that Jesus is our salvation and life. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Renew your people's commitment to use resources responsibly and to live well with your creation. Invite us to recognize and nurture signs of resurrection life in the natural world. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Direct those who are given human authority to lead with humility and compassion. By your Holy Spirit channel their attention toward serving those who are most in need. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Uphold your children who cry out to you (especially). Wherever people are overcome by the fear of death, breathe into them your life and peace. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Inspire those who lead your people in worship and praise. With joyful motion and sound, send us forth with praise that we cannot keep to ourselves. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Give us the words of your saints who, like Thomas, boldly confessed your Son as Lord and God. With Jesus our leader, empower us to live according to his ways. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

In your mercy, O God, respond to these prayers, and renew us by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Hear us now as we pray the words that Christ has taught us,

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 the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

God, the Author of life,

Christ, the living Cornerstone,

and the life-giving Spirit of adoption,

✠ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace. Tell what God has done.

Thanks be to God.

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