

Easter #2

4-11-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“The Easter season is a week of weeks, seven Sundays when we play in the mystery of Christ’s presence, mostly through the glorious Gospel of John. Today we gather with the disciples on the first Easter, and Jesus breathes the Spirit on us. With Thomas we ask for a sign, and Jesus offers us his wounded self in the broken bread. From frightened individuals we are transformed into a community of open doors, peace, forgiveness, and material sharing such that no one among us is in need.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Alleluia! Sing to Jesus”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 133

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!
² It is like the precious oil upon the head,
running down upon the beard,
upon the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!
³ It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,
life for evermore. .”

Hymn of Praise: [“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing!”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the day of our Lord’s resurrection. By the grace of Christ among us, enable us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Acts 4:32-35](#)

2nd Reading: [1 John 1:1-2:2](#)

The Gospel: [John 20:19-31](#)

Hymn of the Day: ["That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright"](#)

The Message: Vicar Karen Pugatch ([Video Link](#))

The Holy Gospel is according to John the 20th Chapter
Glory to you, O Lord.

John 20:19-31

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 Jewish Authorities, 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, which are not written in this book. 31 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.

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

No doubt you have heard this story many times before. It is Easter evening, and the disciples are reeling from the trauma of the past week. We are told they are afraid, likely they are deeply grieving, feeling rudderless and unsure of what to do next. But where is Thomas? Why isn't he there with the rest of the disciples? What is going on? WHO IS THIS THOMAS?

Our first insight into Thomas comes as part of another familiar story-the raising of Lazarus. As Jesus and the apostles argue if going to Bethany is prudent in light of the threats on Jesus' life-Thomas, knowing that Jesus will go, says, "Let us go that we might also die. (11:16) Bold words! From this I learn that he is a man of action-someone who sees what needs to be done and does it- maybe even something of a concrete thinker here unwilling to engage in endless discussion needing to be on the move.

We hear from Thomas again during the farewell discourse-that long conversation at dinner where we pause and listen as Jesus informs the disciples about what is to come, teaches them again about service, exhorts them to love and belief, reminds them that they will be hated by the world. He tells them he is going to prepare a place for them and that they know the way. Thomas (concrete thinker that he is) is a bit unsure about this and (being a man of action, and that rarity among men unafraid to ask for directions) says "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

The way is not the geographical road but the revelation that Jesus is the point of access to God, the life God has to give and the embodiment of what that life looks like there in that place, here in our place. Jesus is our unlocked door to God's promised reality. Speaking of present reality...

It has been quite a year! For us and the followers of Jesus in this story it is safe to say that we all come to this day suffering from some kind of trauma. For us it is Covid, the ongoing gun violence, racial violence, economic stress and the divisive political and social environment. For the followers of Jesus the entry into Jerusalem to the betrayal, trial, denial and crucifixion - traumatic to say the least. Their hopes and dreams, plans and expectations have been dashed-death and the black hole of the tomb loom large in their hearts and minds. And now the tomb is empty- Mary has claimed to have seen Jesus-so much to get their heads around!

We all react to trauma in different ways. When I was diagnosed with Stage 3C ovarian cancer our youngest two kids were in High School. Sam, the older of the two took to his room and curled up under his blankets-paralyzed by the uncertainty of what lay ahead. Josh played soccer- for him kicking and running, sweating and panting was the way to process the news. My husband, asked questions, made phone calls sought the experts. I received the news lying in the dark room of the ultrasound suite. My response was to close my eyes and pray-some things are just too big to handle-indeed this was one of those things. Many ways to deal with trauma.

The disciples deal with it behind locked doors. They are together here in their grief, pain, and fear, choosing to process the events of the past few days together in community-all except for Thomas.

Jesus appears among them, greets them offering peace- they do not recognize him. Now, I don't know about you, but if someone just appeared in my room -I'd be a bit freaked out! Seeing their fear and before they can even ask, he shows them his hands and his side-proof that he is indeed the risen Lord-only then do they recognize him, only then can they hear his greeting of peace and rejoice. They seem to need this proof to recognize Jesus. Why? Because resurrection changes you. Mary did not recognize Jesus until he spoke to her, the disciples on the road to Emmaus until he broke the bread, later on the beach they will not recognize him again. This death beating Jesus is somehow changed- yet by calling Mary's name or showing his wounds he connects the earthly incarnate Jesus whom they love to this triumphant risen being that appears before them. This resurrected Jesus bears the wounds that he suffered and yet is here among them-somehow changed. Resurrection changes you-it does not guarantee a wound free life-rather it offers a way to live despite those wounds.

The disciples are hiding, maybe paralyzed by their fear, but Jesus comes to them in their darkest hour offering peace and blessing, giving them a gift and a responsibility and a way forward empowered by the Holy Spirit, loving them into a future of which they are uncertain. Jesus knows that their belief is tenuous in the face of fear, grief and pain. Jesus comes to them in this time of great need lifting them out of their confusion and brokenness, offering peace and a changed way to live-courage to replace their fear.

This is how it is for us as well. It is in those times of deepest fear and unbelief-what we tend to call doubt- that the presence of Christ claims, calms and comforts us despite our doubt, grief, fear, or anger. Christ is present with us in our own suffering and pain, bringing light into our darkest times-changing us. Entering through those locked doors we hide behind and showing us the way forward into a world that is uncertain, frightening and full of danger, yet never leaving us there alone.

Resurrection changes you... Jesus still bears the wounds of his crucifixion a reminder to us perhaps that though, changed and equipped there will be pain.

Thomas knows-the tomb is empty-maybe he has been there and seen it, maybe he just doesn't want his heart broken again. But don't be too hard on him, the others did not believe Mary when she came to them with the same words indeed, they did not immediately recognize Jesus when he stood among them- and they were in "the room where it happened!" They were given what Thomas longs for. Jesus gave them what they needed-**himself**, gives us the same.

But a week later we find them all gathered behind those locked doors-still afraid. Jesus comes again, not leaving Thomas behind, recognizing Thomas' need for proof and offers himself up

again-offers more. We do not know if Thomas took him up on the offer to touch, but we do know that in the presence of the risen Jesus, Thomas responds with powerful words of faith. Indeed, he recognizes Jesus' divinity and from the relationship that is true faith as he exclaims "My Lord and my God!" Thomas is truly a believer. One who has encountered the presence of the living God-changed by the resurrection. Doubt, you see is not the opposite of faith but part of it. Everyone has doubts and questions and these drive us deeper seeking answers and strength. Faith is a gift from God and our belief is not a one-time event but rather a relationship with the living God that grows and faces challenges and changes throughout our lives.

We can go out into the world alone looking but we will not find redemption or salvation or the answers we seek there. Our God comes to us, seeks us and stirs us into action. Salvation enters into the locked doors of fear, doubt, and privilege in our lives, driving out fear, answering doubt's questions and refreshing us with the cleansing breath of the Holy Spirit. This life giving Spirit bids us to go out from behind the doors that separate us from the world. Out as people changed by Christ, as agents of change **for** Christ. Out into the world to carry on what Jesus came to begin as resurrection people changed- Commissioned, sent, empowered by a faith, not based the certainty that we have touched the wounded body of Christ, but enlivened by the reality of God -who loves unconditionally, forgives totally and a deep abiding trust in what God does for us- God who changes us through resurrection

Jesus can't be stopped by locked doors. He keeps showing up. We have proof of that. He is here in water, word, bread and wine, in our acts of generosity and service, beside us in our pain, among us in our community. A community of Easter people enlivened by the breath of God that is the Holy Spirit-resurrection people changed, charged and sent, refreshed and renewed. Sent to share God's love in those places where the world erects locked doors to deny its existence. As we embark on our journey we will be wounded and experience hate, doubt, grief and anger, we might just rage at God, but God will bear it all, has heard it all before, has walked among us wounded and scorned-loves us 'till the end.

Just so you know-I think that Thomas was out looking for Jesus. Not Jesus' body, but the risen Lord. I think he was revisiting those places that Jesus had been-looking for the familiar in the familiar- looking for a restoration of that relationship. Maybe he was unable to be with the others-needing to be alone with his grief and fear, needing **to do something** about it. In truth we will never know for sure where he was, but no matter where he was or what he was doing or doubting, Thomas was a man of faith-claimed by Christ-changed by the resurrection- one whose belief was strong. With Thomas we are witnesses to the resurrection, a people changed. Resurrection changes you, changes us, allows us to stand with Thomas and exclaim My Lord and My God. Thanks be to God!

Amen

Anthem: [“The Peace of the Lord” - Babbie Mason](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

With the beauty of new life around us Lord God, we are thankful for your wondrous creation. Even greater is the promised gift of new life as given to us through the resurrection of Jesus; Let this gift give us not only hope but peace within the core of our being. May this peace be founded in a living love which is the witness needed to bring peace within our troubled society. May this peace enter into the lives of all our leaders so they become free to act in love in their decisions and be able to escape the bonds of extremism, greed, and corruption. We so desperately need to not only hear Jesus' words "Peace be with you" but live that life of peace and love.

Continue to comfort and bring healing to those who are suffering from Covid-19. Instill in us the will to live within the pandemic guidelines so that the spread of this virus will be overcome.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Della Mae Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Vicki and Christian Zanartu, Pastor Jack, We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: [“Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing”](#)

Hopefully, soon we will resume in person services – stay tuned. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thoughts.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291

Announcement!!!

Weather permitting we will begin our Sunday outdoor worship next Sunday, April 18th, 9:30-10:30 AM.