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A sermon for the Second Sunday of Easter  
April 19, 2020

### **The Holy Gospel according to John 20:19-31**

*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 Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "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." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 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." 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." 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." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 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." 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.*

**The gospel of the Lord.**

Grace, peace, and mercy are yours in the one who meets us in our doubts, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Alleluia, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

It's a strange place to sit on this second Sunday of Easter, isn't it? Much like we did last week, as our Easter "alleluias!" were shouted at computer screens in our own living rooms or a few parking lots, or pasted in windows, where we took it on faith that the chorus was not a solitary as it sounded in our own ears, we trust again that we raise that collective shout of praise, even when we can't hear one another. Shall we?

*Alleluia, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

It's a story of faith that we read this morning as we step into the post resurrection hours recorded in John's gospel. Faith in its purest form and sweetest formation. First, that very evening and then a week later, where the disciples are locked together in a room that had once held them as a whole group but now finds their number down by two. And we sometimes think of the fear that must have swirled outside – fear of arrest, death, unrest in the streets, fear of association with Jesus, or maybe even fear of not being recognized as a friend of Jesus...but I'm sure there was just as much, if not more, grief and pain and anger swirling inside those walls and locked door. We as humans know too well the pain just one death can make in our hearts. They had two! Add to that the betrayal by one of their own, denial of Jesus by another, and my guess is that group of rag tag disciples was a hot mess!!!

And yet what could they do but be there together, holding space for their hurt? I imagine tempers may have flared a bit as confinement is wont to bring out in us, trust was probably a little fragile, and hope perhaps more fragile still.

And into all of this comes Jesus.

And what does he do? He shows them his wounds. Wounds in his hands and his feet that point back to all the shouting and the marching down the road with the cross on his back as the people watched. Wounds that point to the man on the cross who prayed for forgiveness for the very ones who were torturing him. Wounds that are every bit as real as the wounded hearts that sit with him now in the room in fear. Wounds that boldly say, "Friends, the hurt didn't get the last word! So now **you** get to go boldly into the world in my name and do the things I came to do.

Because your wounds are part of this story too.

Do you ever think of your own wounds as part of the God story you get to tell the world? All the hurt, the betrayal, the fear, the scars...all those parts of your story you might rather leave off your perfectly curated social media pages... those are the wounds that teach us. Wounds give us perspective. Wounds give us background, history, sympathy for others, love for those who have walked a similar path. Jesus could have come out of that tomb shiny and pretty, but he came out looking like death. Death and life and life and death all rolled into this savior standing in the middle of the room with the ones he had loved most in the world.

It is a story of faith, but maybe not in the way we might first think. Thomas missed the reunion. When he came back, the other ten had this incredible story of what they had seen, and he missed it! And like any of us might have done, he was adamant that he gets that experience with Jesus, too.

*Alleluia, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

INDEED. It's a powerful word, and there's a reason we use it in our Easter proclamations from now until Pentecost. But did you know that the word "indeed" can have two meanings? It can mean "everything I just said is absolutely true, and I affirm it 100 %." But it can also mean just the opposite. "Indeed" can be a question of truth, a little smack of irony, or an incredulous snort.

And maybe, just maybe, the journey of faith in the resurrection story is a journey from the latter "indeed" to the first. Maybe Thomas' reaction to the excited "We've seen the Lord!" was more of an "indeed" (of course you did, brothers, just one more wacky fry in the box for this week.) But a week later, and I wish I knew why Jesus waited a week, Jesus comes again. After a week of Thomas having to hear the disciples tell their story over and over, but maybe not with as much conviction as they think they had, since we still find them locked in that house a week later, Jesus shows up again. And Thomas is invited into the experience. He places his hands in those scared palms, the palms that he had seen heal the sick and raise the dead. He places his hand against the pierced side, the side that he had walked with for hundreds of miles all over Judea. And the wounds of his own heart heal a little as he declares Jesus to be **exactly** who he claimed to be. "My Lord and my God."

Faith for Thomas comes when Jesus meets him at his doubting spot and brings what Thomas needs to make the step from one weary and wary “indeed” to a certain, clear, shout-it-from-the rooftops “INDEED!”

In faith formation, we trust in what we cannot see. We open the doors for questions and doubts. We welcome and invite in, in fact we BLESS, the doubters. Because it is in them that we see the wounded meet the one whose wounds are also a healing balm. We teach our children that it’s okay to wonder why on earth things are as they are. We know that the love of Jesus has room for wondering and Jesus holds the space for us to jump from “indeed” to “INDEED!”

My siblings in Christ, we are a church becoming something new in these weeks where we find ourselves locked up together in our homes. Whatever it is that swirls around you, inside and out, whether that is fear, doubt, grief, anger, uncertainty, even joy that feels all cooped up and unshared, know that Jesus is not kept out by anything we can construct. He sits on the side of the hospital bed with the one who can’t breathe and longs for the presence of a loved one. He sits at the table with the squabbling kiddos trying to do math problems while parents try to work and teach at the same time. This is the Jesus who sits on the couch and weeps with the one who has lost their income and has no idea how they are going to pay the rent or buy groceries for who knows how long. The Jesus sent by the Father with all the love for the world joins us in *our* love for the world as we watch with broken hearts as the pandemic numbers rise and fall.

And Jesus is with us when our “indeed” is a little shaky, when we doubt, when we fear, when we can’t even get there at all.

Picture those nail scarred hands held out to you, beloveds. Our brother Thomas stands with us as a testament to faith when it all seems hopeless. And we love him for it. So let’s shout it one more time.

*Alleluia, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

**Amen.**