

2nd Sunday of Easter – April 16, 2023

As you know, sometimes I give titles to sermons. I do so today. Today's title is "This one is for you." And it refers to Jesus speaking to Thomas (**John 20:24-29**). But it also refers to Jesus speaking to you and me. We're in this gospel.

All of us, baptized or not, ordained or not, go through periods of doubt as to whether this man Jesus is indeed God in human form. And each time we question our faith, we get a response from God which is the equivalent of "Put your finger in the mark of the nails in my hands and side."

God wants us to believe. That's why God engages us as another human being. "See for yourself" God says. It's a strategy, aimed at you and me. Not just theory, but physical contact. From **Acts 2:24**: "But God raised him up" so that Thomas could actually touch the Risen Christ.

Well, we don't have the option that Thomas had, so what is the next best response we can make? If not touching a wound, what?

That answer is going to vary from person to person, isn't it? But not everything is going to be different. We have the same basic issue, don't we? We want to believe. And sometimes that belief is strong, and other times that belief is shaky.

In a sense, we are "a work in progress" when it comes to our belief in Christ. It's a journey. There are moments when we are right there, just a few inches from touching the side of the Lord. But other times, maybe most of the time, there's some distance.

And usually, when there's separation, it's on us, not the Risen Christ. He's available. We are the doubters. We are Thomas.

But, also like Thomas, we can change our mind and take a chance. And, perhaps, just perhaps, that reluctant decision is a spiritual life-saver. Touching the wound of Christ can take many forms. And often that touch is over time. It's often a journey, not a poke. And it's a journey that pleases God. And it's a journey that pleases you and me.

Responding to the Lord is not easy. It's not comfortable. It's not a piece of cake. It takes courage to touch that wound. And God understands this. God respects our journey. And God respects the freedom to touch now or wait to touch or not to touch at all.

If we didn't have some sense of God being close to us, even when we keep our distance from God, you and I probably wouldn't be here today. But we are here. We apparently want to stay on God's radar whether we're ready or not.

Please, God. I'm not ready to touch yet. I need more time. I'm almost there, but there remains doubt that is holding me back.

But I do believe that you are there, and will stay there, with your arms open, and will welcome me when I'm ready. Don't give up on me.

And, of course, God doesn't give up on us. The Thomas episode proves that. He had multiples chances before he finally said "Yes, Lord. I'm ready."

You and I are at some stage of a belief journey. Only you know where you are in terms of validating the Resurrection. For all of us, I suspect, there remains room for growth, for deeper belief, for reporting for duty.

And when we're ready, the Lord will greet us. And, in the meantime, the Lord will be patient. And when we resist the whole notion of being a child of God, God will be extra patient.

From today's Gospel (**John 20:29**): "Jesus said to him – and to you and me – have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

That's where we are. We are in process. We are "coming to believe." And it's pretty exciting, knowing that we're not going to be tossed from class because we have questions. We like to ask questions, almost as much as we like to answer questions. We really are a work in progress. And I don't think we would want it any other way. And, more to today's point, I don't think God would want it any other way.

Now, maybe this is wishful thinking. Maybe this is simply getting a grade of incomplete in God's Introductory Class. Presumably at some point we'll have a better idea of whether we want to stay with this class. What we know for sure is that God will continue to welcome us. Maybe even appoint us as classroom assistants. I'm hoping for Paper monitor. What a privilege.

And, for all of us, reviewing today's Psalm 16 is a useful exercise:

"You, God, will show me the path of life; in your presence, God, there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand, Lord, are pleasures for evermore." **(Psalm 16:11)**

And what is one of those pleasures? Being here, together, all of us as "works in progress." Not "Class dismissed," but "The Lord be with you."

And, as we accept that invitation, we begin to understand what Peter understood, and which he shared in our Second Reading today **(I Peter 1:3-9)**:

"Although we have not seen him, we love him; and even though we do not see him now, we believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for we are receiving the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls."

That's a wonderful and accurate description of this worshipping community.

"Paper, anybody?"

Amen.

Service of Holy Communion
Second Sunday of Easter – April 16, 2023

Hymn 174 – At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing

At the Lamb’s high feast we sing praise to our victorious King,
who hath washed us in the tide flowing from his pierced side;
praise we him, whose love divine gives his sacred Blood for wine,
gives his Body for the feast, Christ the victim, Christ the priest.

Where the Paschal blood is poured, death’s dark angel sheathes his sword;
Israel’s hosts triumphant go through the wave that drowns the foe.
Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed, Paschal victim, Paschal bread;
with sincerity and love eat we manna from above.

Mighty victim from on high, hell’s fierce powers beneath thee lie;
thou hast conquered in the fight, thou hast brought us life and light:
now no more can death appall, now no more the greave enthrall;
thou hast opened paradise, and in thee thy saints shall rise.

Easter triumph, Easter joy, these alone do sin destroy.
From sin’s power do thou set free soul’s newborn, O Lord, in thee.
Hymns of glory, songs of praise, Father, unto thee we raise:
risen Lord, all praise to thee with the Spirit ever be.

Page 355

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

Collect for Second Sunday of Easter

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading – Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Psalm 16

Second Reading – I Peter 1:3-9

Hymn 193, stanzas 1-3 – That Easter Day

That Easter Day with joy was bright, the sun shone out with fairer light,
when, to their longing eyes restored, the apostles saw their risen Lord.

His risen flesh with radiance glowed; his wounded hands and feet he showed;
those scars their solemn witness gave that Christ was risen from the grave.

O Jesus, King of gentleness, do thou thyself our hearts possess
that we may give thee all our days the willing tribute of our praise.

Gospel – John 20:19-31

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John*Glory to you, Lord Christ*
The Gospel of the Lord.*Praise to you, Lord Christ.*

Sermon

Nicene Creed – page 358

*We believe in one God,
the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again In accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

Prayers of the People Form III – page 387

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;
That we all may be one.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;
That your Name maybe glorified by all people.

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;
That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;
That there may be justice and peace on the earth.

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;
That our works may find favor in your sight.

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;
That they may be delivered from their distress.

Give to the departed eternal rest;
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;
May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom;

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.
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Confession and Absolution – page 360

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;*

*we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

The Peace – page 360

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Announcements and Prepare the Altar

Eucharistic Prayer – page 361

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give him thanks and praise

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: this is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him.

Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion

Post Communion Prayer – BCP page 365

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Hymn 207 – Jesus Christ is risen today

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!
who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

But the pains which he endured, Alleluia!
our salvation have procured, Alleluia!
now above the sky he's King, Alleluia!
where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
praise eternal as his love, Alleluia!
praise him, all ye heavenly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Lessons for Second Sunday of Easter – April 16 2023

Collect: Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one god, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22-332

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and sign that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know – this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn, with an oath to him, that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.' This Jesus God raised up, and, of that, all of us are witnesses."

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 16

Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you;

I have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord, my good above all other."

All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land,

upon those who are noble among the people.

But those who run after other gods
shall have their troubles multiplied.
Their libations of blood I will not offer,
nor take the names of their gods upon my lips.
O Lord, you are my portion and my cup;
it is you who uphold my lot.
My boundaries enclose a pleasant land;
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.
I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
my heart teaches me, night after night.
I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.
My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices;
my body also shall rest in hope.
For you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor let your holy one see the Pit.
You will show me the path of life;
*in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures
for evermore.*

Second Reading: I Peter 1:3-9

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, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel: 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. **Thanks be to God.**