

Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 150; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31

April 24, 2022

St. David's Church 8 am, 11.30 am, 5 pm and Chapel and livestream 9.15 am

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## Experiencing Jesus, coming to faith

Happy second Sunday of Easter! Jesus is risen alleluia hallelujah.

Last week we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus, and we continue reflecting the resurrection in these weeks post-Easter. Easter cannot be contained for just one Sunday. So join me on the journey into the post-Easter reality—where we walk with the disciples as they continue to grapple with how to apply the truth of Jesus' resurrection into their daily lives.

This gospel passage from John is so important to our life of faith matters that we hear it the week after Easter every single year, because it reveals how little resurrections reach us and shape our own heart and lives. I would love to invite you to enter the story anew today.

Our passage includes two stories—two resurrection appearances and closely follows the first resurrection appearance of Mary Magdalene earlier in the day. In the garden, Mary saw the resurrected Lord and exclaimed my Lord! She then went to share with the other disciples, “I have seen the Lord!”

That evening we enter our story with a group of the disciples who themselves get to experience Jesus' resurrection just like Mary earlier in the day and they too echo and exclaim, “We have seen the Lord!”

But Jesus only appears to Mary Magdalene and the other disciples briefly. Yet in his brief encounter, he passes on to them incredible gifts of deep and lasting peace (shalom, in the Greek) and the Holy Spirit. These gifts empower Mary Magdalene and the other disciples to be sent out to share this message that Jesus is alive, and death has been overturned by resurrection.

And then the second part of our Gospel features an appearance a week later. Interestingly this group of disciples is again (or still?) in the same house with the doors shut or locked. The second time they're shut up in their room we don't hear it is because of the fear of the Jews but we're not sure why they're still here.

Didn't Jesus ask Mary Magdalene and the others to go share this news? Or have they been out all week sharing it, and are just resting and reflecting together in the evening.

And then enters our friend Thomas.

Thomas who was somewhere else last Sunday night and so didn't get to witness the reality of resurrected Jesus. He's explained to his disciple friends that he can't trust their witness but wants an experience for himself.

Sometimes we hear this request or demand from Thomas and call him doubting, like his desire is a bad thing. We remember that our theme this year has been all about faith matters. We've searched the Scriptures and discovered that faith is both a noun—a conviction of truth or content of our belief. We have faith, the faith

of the Church. But we remember faith is also a verb, an activity of trusting, believing, affirming, and my favorite—which is not really a current English word—faith-ing.

When we see in this passage the word believe it's actually this word we have contemplated all year long faith *pistis*. In English, we often think of belief as a cognitive or head word. I believe in science or I believe some fact even I believe in God—but it's head knowledge. But the word faith is so much richer and is about active embodied, trusting, heart knowing that includes emotions and feelings and our bodies. More like I have a feeling I can trust this friend, or my gut tells me not to take that job, or my heart knows that my loved one will be okay even through their hardship.

So perhaps our friend Thomas says I don't *trust* other people's experiences. I want to trust or know deeply myself. Maybe he said, I hear the facts you're saying that Jesus is risen. But I want to *know* this for myself, in the deepest most tactile embodied sort of way trusting and believing, not only with my mind but with my heart, body, and soul.

Thomas is perhaps cluing us into a deep truth of faith matters and Christian discipleship. You can hear it 1 million ways from 1000 reputable sources, but you must experience Jesus for yourself.

Thomas reminds us that's OK to ask God what we desire and seek. And that God will always honor a request to see, know, experience the love of God for

yourself. Thomas seeks a true experience of Jesus resurrected, but he wasn't sure how to access that.

Jesus shows up again unannounced and repeats his earlier line peace be with you. I'm here again he seems to say; it's really real. I promise. And maybe the peace Jesus repeats takes hold this time for all of them. Because maybe they can begin to see God's faithfulness to keep showing up in the midst of their uncertainty about what to do post Easter. A week after Easter Jesus won't let a locked door and the lack of trust or faith stop him from reaching out again and again in love.

Jesus meets all of them where they are, but especially Thomas. He invites Thomas to touch and experience and turn from mistrusting to trusting. It was Jesus speaking to Mary Magdalene that caused her to recognize Jesus as resurrected. So too here, it is the voice of Jesus, the words of Jesus to Thomas that prompt his most amazing exclamation of faith trust belief and embodied gut-real affirmation, "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas asked for a miracle to touch Jesus and it seems that it is simply hearing Jesus' voice that caused him to turn his trust fully to Jesus.

Theologian Serene Jones beautifully wrote, "So too it is with us. When doubts crowd out hope, we can be confident that Jesus will come to meet us where we are, even if it's out on the far edge of faith that has forgotten to believe."

Thomas, Emily, each one of us, Jesus says, "I've come to you right where you are right now. You might be wondering if it's okay to ask to see and experience me, if

it's too much to ask and if you just have to rely on others' experiences of Jesus. You are wondering if in the midst of your longing for clarity and truth if you might be able to experience me yourself." And Jesus says, "Your desire to know and see and experience me is good. Let me reveal myself to you so that you can trust in God's faithfulness to always be present."

This is one of the central characteristics of God—faithfulness—and that faithfulness of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ is what enables Mary Magdalene, Thomas, and all the other disciples right down to us to have faith. Thomas reminds us that unbelief or a lack of trust is but a normal part of the journey of faith and that no matter where you are in that journey of Christian discipleship and formation that Jesus will meet you there.

Jesus is faithful to keep calling us to himself even when disciples run away in the garden or run far away from the cross or don't take the news out of the locked room. The disciples often misunderstand or mistrust Jesus, but Jesus keeps showing up because Jesus is faithful and calls us to faith, by leaving us with gifts for the journey—deep abiding peace and the breath of life in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as Mary Magdalene, Thomas, and all the disciples were transformed, so too we can take this transformation of Easter into our own hearts minds souls and bodies and then be sent out with this good news into the whole world. Jesus is risen. Alleluia!