

**Second Sunday of Easter**  
**St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Arlington, MN**

**Rev. Matthew C. Rauh**  
**April 19, 2020**

*The risen Lord is our hope as we through faith look beyond the troubles of this world to the glories of the next.*

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY:** O risen Lord, you came to your disciples and took away their fears with your word of peace. Come to us also by your Word and sacrament, and banish our fears with the comforting assurance of your abiding presence; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**OLD TESTAMENT:** **Acts 2:14a, 22-32** *Later we will hear Jesus tell his disciples to go out and tell everyone about him. We have an example of them doing that as eyewitnesses.*

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ... “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,  
I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will live in hope,  
because you will not abandon me to the grave,  
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.  
You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

**EPISTLE READING:** **1 Peter 1:3-9** *Even though we have not seen Christ, we still have a living hope through faith.*

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

## Sermon

### Peace Be to You, and You, and ...

***“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors 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 side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”***

For several summers I worked at the water plant for the city of St. Joseph. I got to know the workers well over those years. I noticed something. Most of them had nicknames. One guy was called “Doc.” Another was called “Pip,” and another was called “Slim.” One of our own is nicknamed “Bear” Trocke. He doesn’t know how he got it or why. But it has stuck. I wouldn’t be surprised if the US Government knows him as “Bear” and not Richard. What is your nickname?

I always felt sorry for Thomas in the Bible. He got a nickname he wished he never had. We know him as “Doubting” Thomas. This is how the world knows him, Doubting Thomas. Think about it. We call him that because of this one text before us today. In the Middle Ages the German Christians gave Thomas the symbol of the Jackass. Any dictionary would have his name listed for one who doubts. It has stuck. I wonder, when we go to heaven, we would see him and say, “Hey, aren’t you Doubting Thomas?” And Thomas would roll his eyes.

Let’s not be too harsh on Thomas. He wasn’t the only one who doubted Christ. We could all easily be nicknamed Doubting Tim or Fred or Sue. That is why God took the time to tell us about Thomas. In a sense, he is telling us we need the same assurance that Thomas needed. Let’s go now to that locked room and hear Jesus tell us, “Peace be with you.”

#### *I. Peace to us.*

It is still Easter day and we find the disciples huddled together. But something is wrong. We are told that they lived in fear. They were afraid for their lives. They saw what the Jews did the past few days. They saw how they riled up the crowd and got Jesus crucified. Surely they will come after them as well. They were afraid so they hid behind locked doors.

But they didn’t just fear the Jews. Ever regretted something? They did. They felt shame. They had abandoned Jesus in his hour of need. They didn’t love him enough to help. They didn’t trust him enough to risk life and limb for him. How would God feel about that? They hid from the Jews, but you know they

certainly must have felt guilty over their conduct the past few days. This is how they felt because they didn't believe Jesus rose from the dead.

Now let's take it one step further. For whatever reason, Thomas wasn't there. We don't know why. Maybe he had errands to run. Maybe he was so distressed he needed to be alone. But because he wasn't with his fellow believers, he missed out on a lot. Like the rest he must have been filled with doubt and fear, but he only made it worse on himself. The women told him they saw Jesus alive. The disciples told him they saw him alive. The Emmaus disciples were there that Sunday evening and they told them he was alive. But Thomas refused to believe them. He became stubborn. He not only has to see Jesus; he has to touch the wounds.

See what happens when you live as though Christ has not risen from the dead? I think we could have easily been in that room that night, or the disciples would be just as comfortable in sitting in our pews today, or during this stay at home order, sitting in our chairs watching church. They are like us and we are like them. We have heard and seen the same things they did. All our lives we heard about Jesus and how he came to suffer and die and rise again. We witnessed the women see him alive. We saw his miracles. We heard the angels say he is not here; he is risen. They listened to the Emmaus disciples just like us. Yet they lived in fear. Why? They may have heard the words that Jesus is alive, and they even acknowledge the fact that he may be, but they didn't really trust or believe it.

We acknowledge and confess Jesus rose from the dead, but we don't always let that sink in or inwardly digest that. How do I know we are guilty of the same thing as them? Because we keep falling into fear and worry. If Christ had not been raised, we have a lot to fear. We would be afraid of the past, the present, and especially the future. If Christ had not been raised, we would be living life alone and are afraid we will have to face God's judgment seat all alone. If Christ had not been raised, then we would live in fear of death for we know the worse is yet to come.

So Jesus comes to us and what are his first words? ***"Peace be with you."*** He tells us to stop worrying and to stop being afraid. Then he shows us his wounds. That's what Jesus did that evening for the disciples and a week later for Thomas. He shows us his wounds. I have a small scar on my left thumb. I got it when I worked in a grocery store cutting open a box. Soldiers receive purple hearts for wounds received in battle. Jesus has his battle wounds, too. They may have been put there by men as they pounded the nails into him and thrust a spear into his side, but really those scars were caused by God. Jesus was wounded for our sins. And because he was wounded and not us, we are at peace with God.

Peace be with you because Jesus rose from the dead. Peace be to you because he is alive. Now we get it, don't we? Now the words of Job make sense. ***"I know that my redeemer, ... and in the end I will stand with him."*** Guess what? You are not alone. You don't have to be afraid of the past or present because your sins are forgiven. Guess what? You are not alone when you stand before God in the future. Your Redeemer lives and is making intercession for you before the Father. This risen Jesus promised he is with you to the very end of the age. You don't have to be afraid. The worse will be behind us. The best is coming.

The key of course is God's Word. ***"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*** ***Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*** It must have been something to see Jesus that night. It must have been something to see his miracles. But you have something better. You believe even though you did not see all of that. That is what Jesus says here. Remember the Emmaus disciples? They were depressed, too. They didn't believe he rose from the dead. But all that changed. How? Remember how Jesus hid his identity from them? They thought they were talking to a stranger. Yet they believed, didn't they, without seeing Jesus alive and well. They believed when he opened up the Scriptures. Remember what they said? Their hearts burned inside them when he shared the Word.

The other disciples heard those same words, but look at all the grief they caused themselves for not fully believing them. Think of all the grief you can spare yourself. You don't have to see. God gave you

the Bible for one reason, so you may believe that Jesus is your Christ and Savior and by believing have life.

*II. Peace to everyone.*

***The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."***

Jesus puts us to work. When Jesus healed the paralytic who was lowered into the roof of the house, he forgave the man his sins. The Pharisees complained that only God can forgive sins. They were right! Only God can forgive sins. But do you see what Jesus is doing here? He takes the keys to heaven and he gives a set to each of us and tells us, "Use them." Any of you, even children, can forgive sins in the name of Jesus Christ. And when you do, you just took the key and opened heaven.

Why us? Why us? We, like the disciples, are not the best qualified; others speak better, know better, act better. But we have one qualification that puts us above the rest: like the disciples, we know what it means to struggle with sin and temptation, to have doubts, to experience fear, only to have all of that driven away by a risen Christ who shows us his wounds and says, "Peace be to you." We are qualified because we know and love that peace.

And even though so much of the world will not listen, and we know what the world is capable of doing; look at what they did Christ. Yet, we unlock the doors and go out and use those keys because we are overjoyed.

So, when we get to heaven, I suppose we might say, "Hey, aren't you doubting Thomas?" That is the beauty of it all. Jesus was patient with Thomas and all his disciples. He is patient with you, too. And no matter what nickname Thomas had or you have, doubters, adulterers, even murderers will be found in heaven because Jesus bears on his body the wounds that set us free. Peace be with you. Amen.