

St. Mark's Episcopal Church – April 7, 2024

Easter 2 B – Track 2

William H. Grow, Jr.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Thomas Sunday

Our Gospel today provides the story of Thomas' encounter with the risen Christ. As a result of that encounter, today is often referred to as "Thomas Sunday". At the heart of this passage lies the account of Thomas, a disciple who famously expressed his doubt regarding the resurrection of Jesus. It teaches us about doubt, belief and the transformative power of Jesus. It shows us that even when we are in doubt, Jesus meets us where we are and offers us peace.

Thomas' skepticism serves as a poignant reminder of the struggles we often face in our own faith journeys. His insistence on physical proof before believing, echoes our own desires for tangible evidence in a world that often challenges our convictions. In the midst of Thomas's doubt, Jesus appears to him, offering not condemnation but understanding. Jesus invites Thomas to touch His wounds, to witness the reality of His resurrection. This encounter embodies the compassion and patience of Jesus who meets us in our moments of uncertainty and gently leads us towards a deeper understanding of His truth.

We too may have doubts and question our faith. We may struggle to believe without tangible proof. But we are invited to trust in Jesus, to seek him and experience his presence with us. Also, even though we might not be able to touch Jesus and put our fingers in his wounds, we can believe because the proof is there. It comes from all the witnesses who provide the same facts of his movement among them after His death and resurrection. There is no disagreement by any of them as to what happened during these times. This alone is enough proof for me.

Thomas makes a transformation from doubt to belief. Through this we see the power of meeting the living Christ. This change from doubt to belief provides a beacon of hope for all who struggle with questions of faith. We are invited to speak to Jesus and give Him our doubts, trusting in His ability to give us strength in our belief and to grant us the peace this faith can give us.

There are several things that I take away from this Gospel. First, in the beginning of this passage, the disciples are hiding behind locked doors, gripped by fear. Jesus appears in their midst and offers them peace. Shalom. This serves to remind us that even in our most fearful and trying moments, Jesus' presence can provide us with reassurance and help calm us.

Second, Thomas expresses doubt which may mirror our own moments of uncertainty. Jesus does not condemn, but invites us to trust in Him and experience His presence in our lives.

Third, just as Jesus showed his wounds to Thomas, he shows us His love and grace in our moments of uncertainty. Through encounters with Him, our doubts can be grounded in a deeper faith, rooted by who He is, and not by what we see.

Next, Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who believe without seeing. It challenges us to grow our faith that goes beyond the tangible and rely on the promises of Jesus. That's us. We are included in that blessing.

Finally, our faith is not based on mere historical rhetoric, but on the personal encounters the witnesses had with the risen Jesus. Because of these, we can believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.

With this belief and faith, we are called to continue to spread the good word. We are asked to have faith in ourselves and look for ways we can help our little church and the diocese expand by bringing new participants into the fold of our church.

Some, if not all of you, may have heard about the bishop's call to double the membership of the diocese in ten years. He calls it Grow Church. What can we do to help with this effort here in our church? If you have any ideas, please provide me or Michelle or a member of the vestry with any and all thoughts you might have. Don't hold back. We may not double our membership, but it might help us to grow. That is one way we can honor Jesus and our church. By sharing our love and understanding one on one. By bringing one person at a time into our fold.

Let us end in prayer.

Our father in heaven, we ask for your continued guidance as we continue our search for a new rector for our church and we also ask you to help us in our efforts to expand not only our own membership but that of the diocese as well. We ask for this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.