

Simple Prayer, Simple Praise:
A Worship Service for Sunday, April 19, 2020

Opening Acclamation: (1 Peter 1:3-4; 8-9)

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,

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.

A reading from the 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.

Meditation (by *The Rev. Elizabeth Yale, St. John's—Franklin*)

As an imaginative child, I always wondered about the penultimate sentence in this passage. This is not the only time in the scriptures where the author effectively writes, 'there is more to the story, but this was all we could fit.' The authors of Kings and Chronicles do that often, along with some of the other gospel authors. This is how we explain some of the variances in the different stories, different authors heard different stories, different authors thought certain stories were more important than others, and so on.

Speaking of which, this story of poor "Doubting Thomas" is only found in the Gospel of John. While the other gospel authors share that many of the disciples did not believe Jesus was risen in the first hours or days of Jesus' resurrection, the author of John only shares this story. One of the ways in which this story has power is that it acknowledges doubt directly. In the other gospels, the disciples don't believe until they see Jesus, but no one mentions their doubt. Yet, we know that acknowledging an emotion is important work in moving forward.

Doubt in of itself is not a bad thing. Doubt allows us not to be completely gullible and is helpful in times of discernment. Doubt in some way is a true precursor to faith because if we are basing our faith on facts, then it

isn't faith at all. In our passage for today, Thomas and Jesus confront the reality and blessing of the moment in their exchange about doubt and belief.

After a month of shutdowns and social distancing, we all have our doubts about what life will look like moving forward. Jesus invites us forward into a new world, a new reality. One in which God makes the impossible, possible; and where there are so many good stories, they can't all be told, some of them just have to be believed.

Closing Prayer:

Almighty God, do not let us walk this difficult road alone. Let us be thankful for the companions we meet along the way who sustain us; the healers we meet who tend our ills; the children we meet who bring us joy; and allow us your grace so that we may be privileged to assist those who walk beside us in any way we can.

Amen.

Take a moment now for silent reflection. Think of the people and things that cause you worry or concern; think of the things for which you are grateful. Raise them up in prayer using the words our Savior Christ taught us:

**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.**

Grace:

*Almighty God, our hearts are glad and our spirits rejoice being witnesses to the Resurrection of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ! Let us remember this joyful event with our hearts, hands, and voices and let us for ever express our thanksgiving by serving the most needy among your children. Steady us in those times when our faith seems to waver, and invite us to behold your tangible presence in our times of need; we ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **Amen.***

If you are able to safely take walks in your neighborhood this week, pray for each family residing in every dwelling you pass by. If you are remaining indoors, pray for each friend or family member who checks on you, brings your groceries, or assists you in any way.

Each Sunday at 10 a.m., Bishop Sean and other leaders from across the partnership dioceses will lead worship via the Zoom platform. It can be accessed through these links:

<https://zoom.us/j/127336938?pwd=cm8zUWh0Y2loTjYyKy91YURsTVBCQT0.>

If you are asked for a password, use lakeerie. To join by phone instead of video, dial 646-876-9923 and use code 127336938#

The Episcopal Dioceses of NWP and WNY
by the Rev. Steve Lane and the Rev. Claudia Scheda, and guest contributors as noted.
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