

Message for Sunday, April 12th 2026

Scripture John 20: 19-31

Title "Doubts"

Announcements: Giving options...Special Offering for April is UMCOR. Remember there is an explainer video.

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: You who have touched the wounds of the world. You who have been wounded by the world,

P: Jesus, Christ, our Lord and our God, we have not seen you, Risen One.

L: We have not touched you,

P: But we believe you are our Lord and our God.

L: You are our refuge in hurt and pain; our path of life.

P: You are our Lord and God! Alleluia!

Unison Prayer

Jesus of the Cross, Jesus of the Resurrection, we rejoice in you.

For long before the experience of the cross, you defeated the powers of sin, pain and death in the hurting people around you.

And then you were struck down. But you defeated the cross and stood before your beloved disciples, as you are present today-alive again.

We rejoice in you, Risen Savior, for you opened before us your life-giving peace and power.

You are our Lord and our God.

Alleluia! Amen.

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity, with our own.

Song

Scripture: John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

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"Peace be with you."

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After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

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Jesus said to them again,

"Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

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When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

"Receive the Holy Spirit.

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If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

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But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

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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."

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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."

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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."

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Thomas answered him,

"My Lord and my God!"

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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."

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Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.

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But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

L: The word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Sermon: Doubts

Today's story involves one of my favorite characters in the New Testament. The disciple Thomas. The gospel of John is where Thomas really shines, he has several notable interactions with Jesus in this gospel that culminates in this story. This is the story where he gets the moniker "doubting" Thomas and we are going to spend time reflecting on that today. But before we get there we are going to talk about a few other things that need mentioning so that we can better understand what is happening in this passage.

First I want to note that in verse 19, the disciples are locked in a room "for fear of the Jews." There are two things we need to talk about with the phrase. First, why are they hiding in fear? The best explanation I've heard for that is that the disciples knew that Jesus' body was missing, and they assumed that the Jewish authorities were looking for them to punish them for taking Jesus' body. This is a perfectly logical reason to hide in fear. I think many of us were raised on the idea of how foolish the disciples were to be hiding, but with that context let's face it does seem perfectly reasonable.

The other aspect of that phrase "for fear of the Jews" that we need to remember is that the Gospel of John has a very tense backdrop for its story. This gospel was written later than the other three and was probably written when early Christian communities were being pushed out of Jewish synagogues. This means that the Christian communities were in danger by the Roman government. Jewish communities had a protected status religiously for being an ancient religion, but as the Christian communities got pushed out they no longer had that protection.

Unfortunately, this phrase has been used to justify the hate of all Jewish people. This phrase has been used to justify things like the Holocaust. Antisemitism has a long history in Christianity. I am acknowledging this not to change the meaning of the text but to be cautious about our usage of this phrase. This phrase would be better understood as "Jewish authorities" and disconnect it from the Jewish people as a whole.

If we know turn our full attention to what is going on in the story we can see that Jesus physically appears behind lock and key. Unfortunately, Thomas is not there to

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witness this. When Thomas is told about it he insists on seeing Jesus for himself. We have to notice that he doesn't ask for something that the other disciples haven't already received. They had visual and physical confirmation of Jesus. Thomas wanted the same. Can you blame him?

Sure, Thomas is a bit extreme in saying he wants to put his finger in the wounds. But there is no indication that Thomas carries through with that desire once he sees the risen Christ.

Our scripture ends with the appellation that those who believe and haven't seen the risen Christ are blest. Now my issue here is that the implication has been, and continues to be, that a person of the Christian faith cannot have doubts. That's why we tend to speak of Thomas in a derogatory manner. "Doubting Thomas" ...why don't we say, "Denying Peter." I think we need to focus on the fact that Jesus doesn't reject Thomas for doubting instead seeks to comfort him and prove to him the truth of the resurrection.

To be honest the reason I like Thomas is because I feel like I am Thomas more than anyone else. I've always felt my ministry has been to those who have questions. I don't believe Jesus asks us to follow blindly or stupidly. Instead, we are called to be who we are genuinely, and if that means we have doubts then that's okay.

I think I may have shared this story before in a different context but years ago in college I had a friend who sat down at lunch and said, "For the next 15 minutes I'm going to be agnostic." I just looked at him and shrugged and kept talking. 15 minutes later he said, "I'm glad Jesus didn't come back in those 15 minutes." While it's humorous to think about, it does point to many of our experiences of Christ and faith. We approach it as an all or nothing sum. That is, if we lose our faith, even just a little bit, if we question just a little bit, then we are on the road to hell.

This story shows us that's not the case. Instead, Christ approaches each of us where we are. Christ is open to the doubts and the questions, because let's face it, if God can't handle our doubts and question, is that a God worth serving? Let us be at peace with our doubts, Christ loves us anyway. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer /The Lord's Prayer

Song

Benediction

Song