

The Second Sunday of Easter, April 19, 2020

Pastor Peter Gregory, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Westminister, Massachusetts

Honest Thomas and Risen Jesus

John 20:19–31

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:2

Then Jesus said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, 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 believed” (vv 27–29).

We usually call him “Doubting Thomas” because good old Thomas missed Jesus’ first resurrection appearance to the disciples and didn’t believe when they told him that they had seen the Lord. His well-known response was: **“Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe”** (v 25). He would, of course, eat those words on the second Sunday of Easter when they were again gathered in the upper room and this time **Thomas was with them** (v 26).

But I don’t think “Doubting Thomas” is the best name for him. “*Honest Thomas*” fits a bit better. Thomas wasn’t trying to be skeptical, stubborn, or difficult. He was simply being honest. He was expressing exactly what you or I would say in the same situation: “I’ll believe it when I see it.” Someone rose from the dead? Yeah, right! Show me the living body! Let me see those scars!

If we’re being honest, we’re still that way, aren’t we? We’re often skeptical about what others tell us. We want to see for ourselves. We want to take the evidence and come to our own conclusions. We trust ourselves, our own eyes, ears, and senses, our experience and reason, way more than we trust others. Others might believe it, but *we* know better. I stand just as condemned of this as any of you. Whether we say it out loud or not, we tend to live by the same motto: “*I’ll believe it when I see it,*” not when he or she or you or they see it. When *I* see it. In other words, we see things the same way Thomas does.

There’s one notable exception, however, and that’s children. Children tend to trust what they hear. For them, the world is still filled with mystery and wonder. It has surprises. There are new and unexpected things under every rock and around every corner. They can imagine the unimaginable. They’re able to see through the eyes of others, even

when they haven't seen it themselves. There's a humility about children with regard to others, the world, and especially God.

You may remember that Jesus welcomed children and blessed them during His ministry. Once, **calling to Him a child, He put him in the middle of the disciples and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"** (Matt 18:2–4).

But there's no child behind the locked doors a week after Easter, at least none that we hear about. There's only honest, adult Thomas who won't rely on what others have seen. He's about to get the biggest shock of his life and learn that seeing isn't everything. **Jesus came and stood among them**, and He called Thomas to Him, right in the middle of the other disciples, and said, **"Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe"** (vv 26, 27). Same body that had been crucified, died, and was buried. Same body, for that matter, that was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Same hands, same side, same love with which **He loved them to the end** (Jn 13:1).

Honest Thomas did get to see Jesus, but we're mistaken if we think that's the point. The point is that there's something, *no*, Someone, whom we can trust more than we can trust others and more even than we can trust ourselves. Someone whose word is entirely trustworthy and true. Someone who, when He speaks about life *and* death, knows exactly what He's talking about, because He's been through it. Though Thomas and the other disciples bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord, our trust isn't in them but in Him. What they saw with their eyes, we see by faith.

Honest Thomas gives an honest response to what he sees, the response of faith, with the joy and humility of a child, **"My Lord and my God!"** (v 28). And so He is. This Jesus, who was crucified but whom God raised from the dead, is Himself both Lord and God. Thomas's Lord and God. *Your* Lord and God, and mine, too.

"Have you believed because you have seen Me?" Jesus says. **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"** (v 29). He means you. He means me. He means all who believe not by their own reason or strength but who believe because the Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel and keeps us in this faith to the end.

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:7
