

John 20:19-31

Easter 2; April 8 – 9, 2018

Years ago, there was a judge who lived in Yugoslavia who was electrocuted in the bathtub when he reached up from the tub to turn on the light. His wife found him slumped over the tub. She promptly called the police and the rescue squad. He was pronounced dead at the scene. It seemed pretty obviously how he had been killed. So, they transported him to the local morgue. News began to spread that the Judge had died.

Later that night, guess who woke up because he wasn't dead? It didn't take him too long to figure out where he was. So, he quickly went to find someone so that he could tell his wife, his family, that he wasn't dead. He found the night watchman who quickly ran away because he was terrified. He then returned with another person, to make sure this man was really alive. Finally, they let him go because they could tell that this wasn't a ghost. So, they let him go.

The first person he calls is his wife. When she answered the phone, she screamed and fainted. She thought he was dead. She doesn't believe he is alive. So, he called another friend, but they thought the caller was playing a cruel joke. He slammed the phone down. He goes to the house of another friend and gets the door slammed in his face, because his friend thinks he is a ghost. Finally, he calls a friend who was out of town and hadn't heard the news about his death. He explains the situation and asks for his help in telling his wife, his friends and neighbors that he actually is alive. Finally, they are all convinced that he wasn't dead, but was alive.

Perhaps, that is how the disciples felt. They have trouble believing that Jesus is actually alive. They wanted peace. They wanted to believe, but the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead is hard to believe. They had doubts. They were skeptical. They were afraid. Their doubts were robbing them of the peace that Jesus so desperately wants to give them. John tells us: **"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, 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."**

Why were they so afraid? They were afraid that if the Jewish leaders got Jesus, they were next on the hit list. Perhaps, they were afraid that Jesus was actually alive. They had failed Jesus. They weren't exactly model disciples. Jesus would have perfectly justified if he said to his disciples that Easter Sunday evening: *"How many times do I have to tell you guys that I will rise from the dead?"* He could have chewed his disciples out for not trusting his words. If he was really alive, boy are they going to get it. Like a child who has broken the rules and isn't looking forward to mom or dad getting home, there were terrified that they were going to get it from Jesus. They would have deserved it. Instead, what does he say? **"Peace be with you."** Peace. That's what he came to bring – peace. Jesus has patience with his disciple.

Are you ever afraid? Have you ever felt like you let Jesus down? If Jesus stood in front of you right now, how would you feel? Would you feel comfortable saying to him what you have said to other people or about other people? Have you always taken people's words in the kindest way? Do you ever have doubts? If you have doubts, you are normal. It's not a question as to whether or not we will have doubts. We will. The question is what are you going to do with those doubts? Jesus gives us the answer: **"Peace be with you."** All the doubt that had brought them down disappeared the moment Jesus stepped on the floor in front of them. The one thing that was missing for them was Jesus. Now he was back.

But there was one of the disciples that wasn't there Easter night. Thomas. He's the only disciple whose name gets used to describe someone who is skeptical. Doubting Thomas. I think, however, Thomas has gotten a bad reputation. He was one of the disciples who was fiercely loyal to Jesus. When Jesus says: **"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going,"** (John 14) it is Thomas who asks the question: **"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"** He wants to go with Jesus. When Jesus tells us his disciples: **"Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him,"** it is Thomas who says: **"to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."** (John 11) Thomas was confident in his faith in Jesus. Yet, we remember Thomas for this one moment of weakness. He is remembered for his doubts. Perhaps, Thomas didn't want to

be disappointed one more time by Jesus. He wanted what those disciples got from Jesus on Easter Sunday evening. Thomas wanted in. He wanted to see Jesus once again.

Ever felt like Thomas? You are confident in your faith in Jesus. You will follow him. You are fiercely loyal to him. But then something happens. In a moment of weakness, you are disappointed by Jesus. So, what do you do? You want proof. You want proof that Jesus is actually alive. You want to know that your life is going in the right direction. So, what does Jesus do? He doesn't disappoint. He gives Thomas what he wants. **"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."** Jesus doesn't say these words to get into the face of Thomas. He doesn't say these words to make Thomas feel like a little guy. He wants to bring peace to Thomas. You want peace? Here it is in my hands and feet. You want proof that I love you? Here it is in my hands and feet.

Wouldn't that be great if Jesus would show up today, in person, and show us his hands and feet? But he does in his Word. This Gospel lesson is the same Gospel lesson that is used every year on the Sunday after Easter in many different churches. It is part of the series that many churches follow every week. I think that it is a good thing, because we are not much different than the disciples or Thomas. We need to hear again and again that Jesus came to bring peace. Those disciples in that upper room heard exactly what they needed to hear from Jesus. Jesus wants to remove the fears in our hearts. He wants to take away the doubts. He wants to answer the questions. He wants to give you peace. He doesn't want us to have a blind faith. The key for all of this is found in the last verse of our text: **"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."** He is risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.