

BULLETIN TEMPLATE: Minnesota Valley Church
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
Date: Sunday, April 24, 2022
Church Year Date: 2nd Sunday of Easter

Prelude: Rebekah Olson

Hymn on Powerpoint: "Revive Us Again" HFFOG 574

Responsive Reading from Psalm 148:

PASTOR: Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above.

ALL: Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

P: Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars.

ALL: Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

P: Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

ALL: He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.

P: Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, 12 young men and maidens, old men and children.

ALL: Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. 14 He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart.

ALL SHOUT: Praise the LORD.

Hymn on Powerpoint: "I Believe in a Hill Called Mount Calvary" HFFOG #270

Children's Sermon: A Bible in Your Motel Room

Reader: Justo Pillman

First Lesson: *Acts 5:12-20 The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. 15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. 17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."*

Epistle Lesson: *2 Corinthians 5:16-21 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's*

behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: Apostles' Creed- *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen*

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 (please put on screen)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.

Announcements

GIDEON BIBLE SOCIETY PRESENTATION: Mr. John Monsen

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Songs to be chosen by Hannah Carrizales

“STOP DOUBTING AND BELIEVE” (Life of Christ Series)

John 20:19-31; Pastor Tom Olson; April 24, 2022

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

This year we are working our way through the “Life of Christ” from our gospel lessons. The thing that keeps me going in the ministry is the confidence I have in the Word of God to save lost souls and change lives. I know that even if I can't see it in a big way or measure it, as we look together at Jesus in the Holy Scriptures that it creates faith and changes our lives. Today we look at Jesus and the disciples after the resurrection. Thomas is a focus of our attention as he moves from strong doubt to transformational faith. Let's look at John 20 together, beginning at verse 19 under the theme STOP DOUBTING AND BELIEVE.

I. DOUBTING THOMAS MISSES OUT

JOHN 20:19-23 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

I don't know where Thomas was when all the other disciples were gathered together on the evening of the resurrection. I am very surprised that he was gone since there were numerous reports of people seeing Jesus and talking with angels. I personally believe that he had separated himself from them because of his hard stubborn heart. His attitude when he returned them certainly betrayed him. Time and again, people get an

attitude and they start to draw away from the fellowship of believers. You might say that they get in a “funk.” In Norwegian they called “daarlig humor” or a “bad attitude.” My mother would say, “He is ‘stewing’ about something.” But when you sit home and pout, you really miss out! The other disciples were not much better, they were locked in a room and living in fear. The Jesus appeared! Notice what Thomas missed,

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST: It says here that “Jesus stood among them.” This is why I don’t believe the stone was rolled from the tomb that morning to let Jesus out, but only to let them in. Jesus was no longer confined by physical walls. He just came in, in spite of locked doors. I would venture to guess that their fears disappeared when Jesus appeared. Thomas missed this.

THE PEACE OF CHRIST: Notice that Jesus SAID, “Peace be with you.” His Word is living and active. It is the same word that God used in creation. He speaks peace and they get peace. Thomas had no peace but the other disciples had peace born in their hearts. When we speak the Word of God, lives change. Pastor Jeff Swanson is retiring from 15 years of effective mission work in Alaska. When I was asked to write an article about his ministry, I noted that he was effective because he believed in the power of the Word of God to save souls and transform lives. Pastor Swanson taught the Word of God, book by book, chapter by chapter and verse by verse and what happened? People met Jesus and got peace. Thomas missed this.

THE POWER OF CHRIST: Jesus told those disciples that just as the Father sent Him, he was sending them into the world with the message of the FORGIVENESS OF SINS. He made an amazing statement that when they announced the forgiveness of sins to believers, they would be forgiven and when they warned those living in sin, their sins would not be taken away. Jesus gives us a great honor and responsibility to bring His forgiveness of sins to the world...and that is what people desperately need. Thomas missed this.

DOUBTING THOMAS MISSED OUT.

II. DOUBTING THOMAS MESSES UP

JOHN 20:24-25 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

Ouch, those are stinging words: “I WILL NOT BELIEVE.” He had ABUNDANT TIME to see the empty tomb. He had ABUNDANT TESTIMONY of the disciples and many others that Jesus had risen from the dead. He could have walked to the empty tomb and looked in. But instead, he gets stubborn and says “I WILL NOT BELIEVE.” He doesn’t even say, “I would like to believe.”

REJECTION OF CHRIST’S WORD: He rejected Christ’s word to them. ***Luke 24:7***, “***The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.***” Jesus could not have been clearer. Thomas rejected the Word of the Lord and that is serious. But every time we refuse to believe the promises of God, we too become “doubting Thomases.”

REJECTION OF DISCIPLES’ TESTIMONIES: He had the testimony of the women. He had the testimony of the disciples, “We have seen the Lord.” But he further hardened himself. God just whispers to some and they believe every word He says. Others need to be wacked upside the head with a 2x4. What kind of person are you? ...tender to God’s voice, or stubborn?

Many people reject the Word of God and bring a lot of heartache into their lives as a result. Here is a good verse with good advice: **James 1:21** *“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”*

DOUBTING THOMAS MISSED OUT.

DOUBTING THOMAS MESSES UP.

III. DOUBTING THOMAS MOVES IN

JOHN 20:26-31 *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 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." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

In spite of how hard-hearted Thomas is, Jesus seeks him out.

JESUS APPROACHES THOMAS: Jesus did wait for Thomas to approach him. Jesus spoke up first, Jesus chases him down. A man was being interviewed to join a church. The committee asked him if he had any part in his salvation. He shocked them by saying that both He and Jesus participated in his salvation. A concerned committee member asked him what he meant. He went on to say, “My part was running away from Jesus and His part was chasing me down and catching me.” Jesus always makes the first move.

JESUS INVITES THOMAS: Jesus invited Thomas to touch the nail holes in His hands. He invited Thomas to put his hand into the side sliced open by the spear.

JESUS CONVERTS THOMAS: Thomas didn’t need to touch those wounds. Thomas instantly believed and confesses Christ as, *“My Lord and my God.”* **Romans 10:9&10** *“That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”*
NIV

JESUS BLESSES US: *“...blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed.”* Isn’t that us? We believe in Jesus but we have never seen him with our eyes. We heard the message and put our faith in Him. I can’t claim to have seen or touched Jesus but I know that He has touched me. *“He touched me, Oh He touched me!”* I know that He died for my sins on the cross. And I am sure He is coming back to take me to my home in heaven that He is preparing for me. I sense His presence with me regularly. And I see His Word changing lives. I know that the blessing He speaks here is with us right now and I believe you do too. I have never regretted becoming a believer in Jesus.

CONCLUSION: STOP DOUBTING AND BELIEVE

DOUBTING THOMAS MOVED IN: Friend, would you like to receive Jesus today? Just come with your sin. Lay it at the cross and let Him totally forgive you. Let Him send you His Holy Spirit to live in your heart by faith. Just merely say, *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”* Once Thomas STOPPED DOUBTING AND STARTED BELIEVING, his life was transformed. YOURS WILL BE TOO. Amen

“Now may the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen”

Hymn #97 “I Know That My Redeemer Lives”

Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

Doxology (AH #390) *Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A-men. A-men. A---men.*

Postlude: Rebekah Olson

Reader: Justo Pillman

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