

The Second Sunday of Easter - Year B - 12th April, 2015

Christ is Risen! The Easter celebration continues with the familiar upper room appearances from John's Gospel. But, this year the supporting texts highlight a feature of the resurrection that can easily be missed – the way Christ's resurrection brings us into a unified, loving community in which we share joy and abundant life together.

May we find life in our connection with each other, with the world and with God as we worship this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Acts 4 : 32-35

During the Easter season, instead of reading the Hebrew Scriptures, we hear the experiences of those who were witnesses to the resurrection.]

Despite continuing harassment by the Jewish authorities, the believers in Jerusalem began to develop a new style of community life under the apostles' leadership, sharing everyone and meeting everyone's needs.

1 John 1 : 1-2:2

These Sundays of Eastertide we shall hear a series of passages from this letter. The eternal life from God, writes John, has been seen and touched on earth in the person of his incarnate Word. Now we know God's pure light, and it is we are cleansed and forgiven.

John 20 : 19-31

On the first Easter evening, Jesus appears to his disciples with his habitual greeting of peace, and a gift of the Holy Spirit. Thomas must wait another week until he can see, believe, and adore.

Click here to view the readings

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%204:%2032-35%0A%20BOR%0AIsaiah%2026:%202-9,%2019%0A%20Psalms%20133%0A1%20John%201:%201-20-%202:%202%0AJohn%2020:%2019-31

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty Father,
who hast given thine only Son to die for our sins,
and to rise again for our justification;
Grant us so to put away the leaven
of malice and wickedness,
that we may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth;
through the merits of the same thy Son
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty Father,
you have given your only Son to die for our sins

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and to rise again for our justification:
Grant us so to put away the leaven
of malice and wickedness
that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth;
through the merits of your Son
Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Gathered as believers in Christ, made one body through baptism, let us offer prayers to God for the living hope of all the world.

Deacon or other leader

For peace from on high and for our salvation.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For our new brothers and sisters illumined by the light of Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all those in need, the suffering and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, the dying and the dead.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering our most glorious N..... (*Saint of Parish dedication*) and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

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Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who gives us eternal peace through Jesus Christ. Hear our prayers which we offer in the hope of glory, and breathe upon us with your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Our God, our God, you have not forsaken us, the Church. For the many ways you have empowered us Christians, we praise you, (congregational response: **Lord of the cross.**).

Our God, our God, your creation is inspiring, soothing, and exciting, and we are honored to be a part of it. That we may take better care of it, we pray to you, . . .

Our Mother, our Mother, we thank you for our nation, including our President. Watch over him and each of us. Lead us to bring shalom to all the world. We pray to you, . . .

Exodus-Elohim, we thank you for liberating our Jewish ancestors from slavery in Egypt. Bless Passover, that it may yield joy and strength for all of our Jewish siblings. We pray to you, . . .

We are in awe of the suffering and death of Jesus Messiah. During this holiest of weeks, slow us down to meditate upon the highest of sacrifices, ever praying to you, . . .

Our God, our God, you heal us. Touch all in need [Add names.]. Fill us with the wisdom we need to be your assistants in healing. We pray to you, . . .

You may add other praises and petitions here.

We pray in the name of the Crucified God. Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Lord God our Father,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ
you have assured your children of eternal life
and in baptism have made us one with him.
Deliver us from the death of sin
and raise us to new life in your love,
in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYERS

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life

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and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbors.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbors with whom we share it...*Petitions...*
Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world...
...*Petitions...*
Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,
bringing the promise of the kingdom near
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,
God invites us to bring our doubts and fears,
our joys and concerns, our petitions and praise,
and offer them for the earth and all its creatures.
...*Petitions...*

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Receive these prayers, O God,
and transform us through them,
that we may have eyes to see and hearts to understand
not only what you do on our behalf,
but what you call us to do
so that your realm will come to fruition in glory. Amen.

Dear God, you are astounding! At the end of all your surprises you send among us the One who was crucified, dead and buried, and risen into glory. He comes now as a living Lord, defying our locked doors, banishing our fears, greeting us with peace, and overwhelming us with awe and wondering love. How paltry is our vaunted knowledge, how pathetic our cultured doubts, when our souls are confronted with this risen Christ! How blessed are those who believe him, and how happy are those who receive him. Please receive our thanks, our praise and our worship, and continue bless us beyond our deserving, as we lift up our voices in celebration. In the name of this same Christ Jesus whose presence makes this occasion. Amen

Light of the world,
shine upon us
and disperse the clouds of our selfishness,
that we may reflect the power of the resurrection
in our life together. Amen.

The Salvation of the whole world
O God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
Look favourably on your whole church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery;
and by the peaceful operation of your providence,
carry out the work of our salvation.
And let the whole world feel and see
that things which were cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and all things are returning to perfection
through him from whom they took their origin;
even through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
Gelasian Sacramentary, 7th century.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Acts 4:32-35:

- "one heart and soul" - Such a great vision of how we can wish for things to be in the Christian community, in the world. What are the obstacles that keep this from happening?
- a little bit communist, no? I think the theory is great - it is the greed that gets in the way, and our overwhelming need for individualism. What and how much and with whom are you willing to share?
- The benefit of such a plan is obvious here: "there was not a needy person among them." Isn't that a vision worth working toward?

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Psalm 133:

- Short and sweet?! Check out [Chris Haslam's notes](#) on this Psalm. The image of Aaron's beard dripping with oil signifies total consecration to God.
- Haslam also notes the connection between this Psalm and our Genesis text in that verse 1 here declares, "how very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity."

1 John 1:1-2:2:

- :1 - The author talks about a faith that involves all the senses - a complete immersion. How do all of your senses experience God's love and grace?
- light/darkness imagery can be helpful ways for us to visualize (no pun intended) how Christ impacts our lives. But also be careful when using such imagery. In the past, such imagery has been used by some with racist intentions. Make sure you are clear about what message you are communicating and what message this text communicates.
- :9 - "confess our sins" - so simple, and yet so hard! Admitting we are wrong is hard. Admitting we need forgiveness is harder.

John 20:19-31:

- Ah, doubting Thomas. Most of us are less excited than I am to think of ourselves as being like Judas, but doubting Thomas we can relate to all too well. Who wouldn't want to see for himself, when everyone else had the benefit of seeing the risen Christ up close and personal?
- "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Maybe today it is harder for us to take things on faith because we are so good at finding tangible - or at least scientific - proof for so many things. We can prove so much with our God-given minds - why not prove God? Prove Jesus? What do you believe without proof? Can you prove someone's love for you or yours for them? We try, but in the end, we just must trust.
- John is obviously concerned with verifying the physical nature of Jesus' resurrection by having Thomas touch and feel Jesus, see the wounds. To me, as I mention in the Acts passage, I think the life of Jesus gets ignored in our obsession with his death and resurrection. Obviously, his death and resurrection are important to us - but would they be important if he had taught nothing in his life? If he had not been in such radical ministry for three years? So, John wants us to know Jesus' resurrection is the real deal. That's fine by me - but the statements about belief are more powerful in this passage, I think. *By Beth Quick*

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The surprising message of this week's lectionary is one that is deeply needed in our world and our Church at this time. This second Sunday of Easter continues the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, but it adds a facet to the story that is not often spoken of – the way Christ's gift of life brings us into a unified, life-giving, faith community. In the Acts reading, the early church is described as a caring, loving

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and serving community in which all things were held in common and no one had need. The famous Psalm 133 celebrates the joy and life that is found in a united community. In John's letter the testimony about Jesus connects with the call to live "in the light", with honesty and integrity, and explains how living like this, in Jesus' resurrection life, brings us into fellowship with God and one another. Finally, in the Gospel, the first appearance of Jesus includes both the sending of the disciples as Jesus was sent to welcome, forgive and heal – proclaiming God's Reign – and the call to be people of forgiveness, which of course, is a key facet to reconciliation. In the Thomas story, the isolation that is felt by one who has not yet come to faith in Christ's resurrection life is poignantly described, and then the joy when he finds faith and a place in the worshipping, faith community is expressed. The simple and obvious message is that the resurrection is not a personal, individual gift, but is also about reconciliation and community. Because of Christ's life we find connection with one another and with God, and we are able to live out of this sense of belonging, welcoming others, as John does in his letter, into the joy that we have found. The truth is that life is always found and enjoyed together.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: One of the biggest struggles we face in the world today is our inability to experience our connectedness with one another, with God and with our planet. In the realm of religion, we have built an exclusivist culture that welcomes and accepts only those who think and act and believe as we do. This "us-and-them" worldview has led to religious violence, social fragmentation, political partisanship and carelessness of creation. In the realm of economics we have underestimated both the impact that risky behaviour in one sector can have on the whole system, and how interconnected the global economy is. And in terms of power, resources and technology, we have failed to grasp how significant our connections are as they bypass the false categorisations and lines of division that we have set up. One result of our failure to apprehend our connectedness is that we lose the joy and life that true community brings. The gap between rich and poor grows, the conflicts between countries, religions and ideologies continue, and the destruction of our planet and its species is unchecked. If we could begin to believe in resurrection as a lived reality, though, we could turn so much of this around. Once we recognise that God's life flows through everything and everyone, we can open ourselves to see the connections that God's life creates, and then we can begin to experience and enjoy our connectedness, ultimately working toward unity and interdependence. But, the starting point is to receive God's Spirit, to practice forgiveness and to go into the world as those who are sent, like Christ, to bring the grace, compassion and justice of God into the world. Then, as we "walk in the light" with one another, we will begin to know the fellowship that John wrote about, and we find abundant, limitless life in our connectedness with God and one another.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Believing is often preached as a cognitive, intellectual thing, and resurrection as a doorway to personal, eternal bliss. Unfortunately, both of these views create division, conflict and isolation of individuals and interest

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groups. The spread of individualism to the life of faith has left in its wake the remains of broken families, broken churches and broken communities – the opposite of the resurrection life of connected community that this week's readings celebrate. The resurrection, though, is a manifestation of God's Reign that impacts every part of our lives – now and eternally. It is a life that is unrestrained, indiscriminate and connecting. When we have truly believed, it changes how we live, and when what we believe is resurrection it moves us toward others in order to share life. Resurrection faith strengthens us when we grieve, because we are able to support and comfort one another. It inspires us when we celebrate because we are able to multiply our joy together. It makes our work more effective because we draw both on the resources of God's Spirit and of our togetherness. In this way God's resurrection life becomes more than just an idea that gives us hope. It becomes the lived reality of every day, and leads us inexorably into the glorious joy and sense of belonging that we find as citizens of God's Reign.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Bruce Prewer - Faith & Doubt. John 20: 25 . Sub headings - Those without doubt; Doubters are not second class; The value of doubt; Doubt can be crippling; Which kind of doubt?

Mind blowing - 1 John 1, 1 - 14. Intro - If we take Christ Jesus completely to heart, including the cross and resurrection, the whole thing becomes mind blowing. It was that way for the first wave of Christians. They were excited, they sparkled. Each one knew what they had to share was "out of this world." Truly awesome! We have witnessed a similar excitement in converts who have had no previous Christian background. The whole thing staggers them; blows the mind wide open to realities they did not know existed. In the new Testament, we find that the first wave of believers maintained their sense of excitement and awe. Paul for example. Even in his letters near the end of his life, there shines through his words an enthusiasm like that of a new of a new convert. Likewise the writer of the First Letter of John.

You need to scroll down a bit for these.

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocB/BEASTER2.htm>

At the edge of enclosure - You will see heaven opened - Useful meditation on Thomas which could provide basis of sermon. "*Thomas* has insisted upon personal contact and even a kind of physical intimacy – placing his finger and hand into Jesus' wounds. Instead, he is given something different which is *more* personal and more intimate: the interior "touch" which is unitive experience of the Spirit. Blessed are those for whom this spiritual contact suffices; they shall be rich in the fullness of the Lord's interior presence, and in the purity and strength of their faith..."

<http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/mysticaljourney/easter2b.html>

"Missouri, 'My Fair Lady,' and the Mission of the Church," the Very Rev. Chadwick Vaughn, Day 1

John 20:19-31 - You may wonder, as I have, what U.S. Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver, Eliza Doolittle, and Thomas the Apostle have in common. To discern this, we need only listen to their own words to uncover a common denominator.

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[http://day1.org/3718-missouri my fair lady and the mission of the church](http://day1.org/3718-missouri-my-fair-lady-and-the-mission-of-the-church)

"The Secret in the Dark," Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

Here is Frederick Buechner's excerpt on Thomas, first published in Peculiar Treasures and reprinted in Beyond Words: Imagination was not Thomas's long suit. He called a spade a spade. He was a realist. He didn't believe in fairy tales, and if anything else came up that he didn't believe in or couldn't understand, his questions could be pretty direct.

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-thomas-0>

"Dealing with Mystery," the Rev. Dr. Laura Mendenhall, Day 1

John 20:19-31 - Do you ever wonder what happened to Thomas? Over the years many stories have been told about Thomas. Here's another--told as I imagine it could have gone for him, years later.... Thomas knew the years had passed when his brittle bones led to a broken hip.

[http://day1.org/1242-dealing with mystery](http://day1.org/1242-dealing-with-mystery)

"Signs of the Resurrection," the Rev. Dr. Guy Sayles, Day 1

John 20:19-31; Acts 4:32-35. I've never appreciated preachers who put Thomas down for his doubts, because I've always identified with his struggles to believe. I agree with Tennyson who claimed: "There is more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds" and with Frederick Buechner, who famously said: "Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving." Thomas' nickname was "Didymus," "the Twin," and I feel like he is my twin, my representative in the Easter story. I want there to be room for Thomas in the church because that means there will be room for people like me.

[http://day1.org/987-signs of the resurrection](http://day1.org/987-signs-of-the-resurrection)

CHILDREN

Worshipping with children - Resources for this day. Several ideas to involve children, and a talk following a reading of John 20: 19 - 29 by children. Reading and talk virtually 'ready to run'.

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/year-b-second-sunday-of-easter-april-15.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Jesus Calls Us

Breathe On Me Breath Of God

All Praise To Our Redeeming Lord

Shine Jesus Shine

Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace

Creation's King

We Believe

King Of Glory

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We Shall Go Out With Hope Of Resurrection