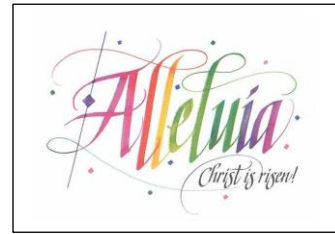


Faith Lutheran Church, First Presbyterian Church, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 19, 2020
Second Sunday of Easter



Introduction

I greet you with Blessings today on this Second Sunday of Easter, April 19th!

My name is Pastor Melinda VanderSys and I serve Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and First Presbyterian Church in Newberry. I am also the Administrative Interim Pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Sault Ste. Marie.

Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

Almighty and eternal God, the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt, may we, who have not seen, have faith in You and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

(portions from the Second Sunday of Easter, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Readings and Psalm

- *Acts 2:14a, 22-32* *Christ's resurrection: the fulfillment of God's promise to David*
- *Psalm 16* *In Your presence there is fullness of joy. (Ps. 16:11)*
- *1 Peter 1:3-9* *New birth to a living hope through the resurrection*
- *John 20:19-31* *Beholding the wounds of the risen Christ*

The Holy Gospel according to John 20:19-31, NRSV

(<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#texts>)

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jewish opposition, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After He said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I send you." ²²When He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So 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."

²⁶A 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." ²⁷Then 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." ²⁸Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in His name.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on this Second Sunday of Easter. Amen.

Imagine that. Being in a home where the doors are locked. Being kept away from society. Imagine being afraid to go outside because you just don't know what might be lurking around the corner or in the neighborhood.

That's how it was the night after Jesus was crucified. The disciples were terrified. They had just witnessed the One they confessed to be the Messiah betrayed by one of them; one they considered to be like a brother to them. Jesus was tried, convicted and then brutally executed by both religious and civil authorities. They didn't feel safe. Was it only a matter of time until they would be rounded up and treated the same?

Yet, on that night, the first day of the week, Jesus came and stood among them. He greeted them with peace. Their immediate fears disappeared. The One they loved, the One they followed, was here with them.

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Thomas wasn't with them. Thomas didn't see Jesus. Thomas didn't believe what the disciples told him. "We have seen the Lord! Jesus was here! You missed Him!" Thomas didn't believe them because he did not see Jesus.

"I need proof," Thomas told them. "I need to 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. Then I will believe just like you believe."

It's no wonder Thomas doubts them. He saw Jesus beaten. He saw Jesus being hung on a cross. He remembers the cries of agony. Thomas probably was trying to figure out what comes next; what his purpose is now. Who will lead them? What are they to do? It is a bit odd, though, that Thomas went out of the house during this time. Maybe he went to get food or see how the townspeople were reacting to Jesus' death. I'm sure he felt the same fear as the other disciples.

We have doubts in our lives, don't we, maybe even more so right now? In our daily life, we may be doubting what the governor and government are asking us to do. We may be doubting that we need to stay away from others and to stay in our homes as much as possible. We may be doubting that it isn't safe to be planting gardens or going boating. We may be doubting that it isn't safe to go outside because there may be something lurking around the corner and in the neighborhood – the coronavirus.

Do we have that same doubt in our spiritual life? Do we, like Thomas, need to SEE Jesus in order to believe in Him, in order to believe He existed and still exists? I don't believe so.

A week later, the disciples, including Thomas, were gathered in the house and Jesus came and stood among them. He already knew that Thomas had doubt so Jesus invited him to touch the marks of the crucifixion; His hands and His side. Thomas knew in an instant it was Jesus. He didn't need to touch Him. And Thomas believed!

“Have you believed because you have seen Me?” Jesus asked him. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Like you. And me. We have not physically seen Jesus with our own eyes. We have not seen the mark of the nails in His hands. We have not put our finger in the mark of the nails and our hand in Jesus’ side. And yet, we believe!

Why is it that we believe? Because we've read the Bible or attended Sunday School and church and have heard this story many, many times? Because our parents or grandparents or baptismal sponsors taught us about Jesus? Because we see the amazing love of Christ all around us and in us and through us?

Why don't we need proof? Is our faith that strong in God the Father, God the Son+ and God the Holy Spirit - that we DON'T need physical proof?

It IS faith. It is faith that what we have heard, what we have been taught, what we DO, the experiences in our lives, that leads us to believe what we have not yet seen.

We are NOT doubters. We ARE believers. Believers in the promise God made to us in sending God's Son - Jesus Christ - into the world.

And even though we may – right now – be in our homes, isolated from one another, unsure of this disease that has affected so many around the world, it is our faith in God that will protect us and guide us through this difficult time. It is our faith in God that gives us the assurance that one day, we too, will be joined with Christ our Brother forever.

That's true faith! That's true us!

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (John 20:29). Let us shout with joy, “Yes, Lord, I believe!” Amen.

Blessing

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

Prayers of Intercession

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

Open the doors we close, O God, when we fear those who worship You in different ways. Guide us to unity and harmony so that we may come to respect and cherish our commonalities.

Open the paths we ignore, O God, when we prioritize financial gain and convenience over listening to the groaning of the earth. Inspire all to care for the world You have made so that living things might thrive.

Open the hearts we close, O God, to the cries of those in pain. We pray for those isolated physically or emotionally through the coronavirus, incarceration, addiction, mental illness, chronic suffering, grief, and all in need, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices....(please name your prayer concerns).

Open the ways of love, O God, in the pursuit of peace throughout the world, and bless the efforts of missionaries, healthcare professionals, activists for women and children, and relief workers, especially those who find themselves in harm's way.

Open the way to eternal life, O God, as we remember those who have died in faith. Free us from the fear of death, that we embrace the peace You have promised.

With bold confidence in Your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into Your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(prayers from the Second Sunday of Easter, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Our Lord's Prayer

I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to pray...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive

those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. Amen.

This concludes our service for today.

This is Pastor Melinda VanderSys. Thank you for joining me today.

Dismissal

Go in peace to serve our Risen Lord! **Thanks be to God!**

Food for Thought

I'm sure there are many things you miss during this time of "Stay Home, Stay Safe". This week, I would like you to think of what your response might be and list some things that you are looking forward to once we are able to safely be out in public and among others. Please feel free to call me at (906) 293-8331 (ORLC office) or (906) 291-0897 (Cell). Note: I may use some of these suggestions in my future sermons (but I won't include your name if you don't want me to!)

Looking forward: