

Sermon for the Second Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14a, 22–32; John 20:19–end (NRSV)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We find ourselves this morning still in the glow of Easter Day—but if we are honest, it is a quieter, more uncertain glow. The lilies so magnificent last weekend are beginning to fade, the alleluias are perhaps a little less exuberant, and we return, as the disciples did, to something closer to ordinary life.

And yet, the Gospel reminds us: the risen Christ meets us not only in triumph, but in uncertainty, in fear, and even in doubt.

In St John's Gospel, we are taken into that locked room where the disciples are gathered on the evening of the first Easter Day. The doors are shut. The air is thick with fear. These are not bold proclaimers yet—they are frightened, confused, unsure what the resurrection really means.

And into that room, Jesus comes and stands among them. No knocking, no fanfare—just presence.

And his first words are ones I will repeat many times over the next few minutes:

“Peace be with you.” (John 20:19, NRSV)

Not rebuke. Not disappointment. Not “Where were you?”

But **peace be with you.**

This is the first gift of the risen Christ: peace in the midst of fear.

Then, as if to make it unmistakably real, he shows them his hands and his side. This is not a ghost, not a metaphor, not wishful thinking. This is the crucified one, now risen. The wounds remain—but they are no longer signs of defeat. They are signs of love that death could not overcome.

And then Jesus does something extraordinary: he sends them.

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (John 20:21, NRSV)

From fear to mission. From hiding to being sent.

And he breathes on them and says,

“Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:22, NRSV)

This is new creation language—echoing the breath of God in Genesis. The resurrection is not just a happy ending; it is the beginning of a new world, a new people, a new calling.

But then we come to Thomas.

Poor Thomas—forever remembered as “Doubting Thomas.” Yet perhaps we should be more generous. Thomas is not refusing faith; he is longing for the same encounter the others have had.

He says,

“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.” (John 20:25, NRSV)

This is not cynicism. It is honesty.

And a week later—notice that, a full week later—Jesus comes again. And this time, he comes for Thomas.

Again, the same words:

“Peace be with you.” (John 20:26, NRSV)

And then he turns directly to Thomas, inviting him to touch, to see, to know.

Jesus meets Thomas exactly where he is.

And Thomas responds with one of the most profound declarations in all Scripture:

“My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28, NRSV)

Doubt transformed into faith—not by argument, but by encounter.

Now alongside this Gospel, we hear Peter’s sermon in Acts. And what a contrast it is.

Here is Peter—once fearful, once denying Jesus—the person who denied knowing Jesus three times - now standing boldly before the crowd, proclaiming:

“This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.” (Acts 2:32, NRSV)

Something has changed. The frightened disciple has become a courageous witness.

Why? Because he has encountered the risen Christ.

Peter is not sharing an idea or a philosophy. He is bearing witness to something that has happened—something that has changed him.

And so these readings together give us a pattern of resurrection faith:

- Fear met with peace
- Doubt met with compassion
- Encounter leading to transformation
- Transformation leading to witness

It is this faith that prompted Sir Walter Raleigh to write in his Bible the night before he was beheaded **“From this earth, this grave, this dust, my God shall raise me up!”**

The American Evangelist R A Torrey described the resurrection of Jesus as being **“the Gibraltar of the Christian faith and the Waterloo of infidelity and rationalism.”**

But what does that mean for us, here and now?

First, it means that Christ meets us where we are.

Most of us have sat, at some point in our lives, behind a locked door. Not necessarily a physical one, but a door of the heart — bolted shut against pain, against uncertainty, against a world that has somehow stopped making sense.

Whether we come today full of faith, or full of questions...

Whether we feel close to God, or distant and unsure...

Whether we are joyful, or anxious, or weary...

The risen Christ comes into the rooms we have locked—whatever those rooms may be—and says:

“Peace be with you.”

Second, it means that doubt is not the opposite of faith.

Thomas shows us that doubt can be a doorway—a place where Christ meets us more deeply. The Church is not a community of people who have everything figured out. It is a community of people who are learning, together, to recognise the risen Lord.

And third, it means that we are sent.

Just as Peter was sent. Just as the disciples were sent. Just as Thomas, too, was sent.

We are sent into the world not as perfect people, but as witnesses—people who have, in one way or another, encountered the grace of God.

And sometimes that witness is bold proclamation.

And sometimes it is quiet faithfulness.

And sometimes it is simply living with hope in a world that so often feels locked in fear.

Jesus says:

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (John 20:29, NRSV)

That is us.

We have not stood in that room. We have not touched his wounds.

And yet—we are invited into the same faith, the same peace, the same life.

So this Easter season, let us listen again for that voice:

In our fear—***Peace be with you.***

In our doubt—***Peace be with you.***

In our calling—***Peace be with you.***

And may that peace lead us, like Peter, like Thomas, like all the saints, to say with our lives as well as our words:

“My Lord and my God.”

Amen.