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Easter 2
1 May 2011
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
John 20:19-31

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Every second Sunday of Easter is Thomas' Sunday.

Again and again, year after year, this doubting disciple *sees* and *believes*.
His hands touch and poke around in Christ's wounds,
and even get a little bloody in the process.

But this second Sunday of Easter isn't any good,
unless you, also, get to touch, poke around, and get a little bloody.

And so, this second Sunday of Easter isn't just for Thomas; it's also for you.

The resurrected Jesus comes to this room even with doors shut,
and He comes to this altar and to this font and to this pulpit,
so that just like St. Thomas, you might see and believe.

Now, we often give St. Thomas a hard time, and feel the need to call him, "*Doubting Thomas*."
But why Thomas?

Why don't we call St. Peter, "*Denying Peter*,"
or St. Matthew, "*Tax-Collecting Matthew*,"
or St. Paul, "*Persecuting Paul*"?

And on top of that, we know that we're no different.
What if we named you by your sin,
this room might be full of adulterous Jims,
and envious Ruths,
stealing Johns,
and gossiping Shirleys!

So, why Thomas?

If we're so quick to forget our own shortcomings,
why is he so unfortunate that we remember his sin year after year?

Well, perhaps it's because every Sunday you've got a doubting Thomas standing right in front of
you,
speaking the Lord's Word to you as Christ Himself,
all the while doubting the very thing He says.

Yes, this Scripture reading that we hear each year is for the comfort of your Pastor, too!
It's a word of peace and forgiveness and faith,
because even the faithful clergy, like St. Thomas, have their doubts.

They doubt that Easter was all that special,
 or that their sermon is worth the effort.
 They doubt that anyone listens to them anyhow,
 or that what they do is even the Lord's work.
 They doubt that they're being faithful,
 they doubt that the Word will accomplish what it says,
 they doubt that they've done enough, well enough, faithfully enough—.

The Pastors of the Church, like St. Thomas, *doubting* Thomas,
 aren't any different from you—
 we all doubt from time to time.

But in the midst our doubts and worries and fears and sin,
 the Lord says to each of us:
 "See this, touch that, all is well—"
 and that gives us all peace.

What makes this resurrected Lord so unique and so different from us,
 is that when Thomas says,
 **"Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails,
 and place my hand into His side,
 I will never believe"** (Jn 20:25)—
 rather than rejecting Thomas and condemning him for his unbelief,
 Jesus still comes to Thomas,
 pulls back His robe,
 and lets Thomas put his hand in His side.

Jesus does not condemn doubting Thomas.
 He doesn't chastise him, or rebuke him, or hate him.
 But Jesus loves him even in his doubts, and shows him His wounds.

And all this He does again for us today.

He comes with peace where there is so much doubt and anguish and pain and sorrow.

Now, just as then, His peace is given through the wounds of His body:
 wounds that are there for seeing and touching,
 and even getting a little bloody.

On that Easter evening, long ago, our risen Lord entered the upper room with no other purpose,
 than to give His peace:
 peace to *doubting* Thomas,
 peace to the Apostles,
 peace to your Pastors,
 and peace to you—
 all through the wounds of Christ.

And that's the way Christ ordered it—
 first to the Twelve and St. Thomas,
 who were breathed on,
 given the Holy Spirit,
 and charged to forgive the sins of others.

The wounds were seen and touched and believed by these twelve—
 by these first *Pastors*;
 and yes, they all got a little bloody by poking around in those wounds.

From *their* seeing and touching,
 they were sent to speak and to feed,
 to heal and to forgive *you*.

Even though they doubted from time to time,
 they knew that what they preached was true:
 Jesus who was crucified has now risen from the dead for you—
 they knew because they'd seen and touched and poked around!

So it is for Pastors like *doubting* Thomas,
 who even in their doubts,
 get up every week and deliver the goods that the Lord has sent them with:
 the forgiveness of sins and peace with Christ.

And so it's the same with you, too—
 by the word and service of those called into the Office of *doubting* Thomas—
 the office of the Holy Ministry—
 you also believe,
 by hearing *and* by seeing *and* by getting a little bloody
 by poking around in His wounds!

The wounds of Christ come to you even today!
 They come through His Word of sins forgiven,
 spoken at the pulpit,
 splashed on you at the font,
 and then, because we've still got doubts like Thomas,
 the wounds are poured down our throats by His holy body and precious
 blood at the communion rail.

So, you see, St. Thomas isn't alone.
 He isn't the only one who doubts, and that's okay!

Our Lord isn't angry with you because you doubt.
 He doesn't condemn you, or turn His back on you, or say, "to hell with you!"
 Our Lord comes and shows us His resurrected body day after day, week after week,
 again, and again, and again!

His gifts of peace and forgiveness come to us even in our weakness, in our pain, in our *doubt*.

So thanks be to God that St. Thomas doubted.

Because even in his doubting, our Lord showed him peace:

peace through the wounds in His hands and His side;

peace through sins forgiven;

peace through our touching, and poking around, and getting a little bloody.

And now, He delivers His peace to you, again:

“Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19).

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit