

First Sermon to my new parish

2nd Sunday of Easter (so called Thomas Sunday)

First Lesson: Acts 5:27-32 –

Temple Priests bring disciples before them

Ordering them not to speak any more

Peter and the disciples say they must obey God.

Epistle: Revelation 1:4-8

He is coming and every eye will see

The Alpha the Omega

The one who is and was and who is to come

The Almighty

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Easter Night, Christ appears to the disciples

If you forgive, they are forgiven, etc.

And a week later Thomas believed

Alleluia. Christ is Risen!

The Lord is Risen indeed!!! Alleluia!!!

Please Be Seated /// {Pause}

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Today is a day of celebration

Some may be pleased to see the dawning

Of a new day for the Church of the Holy Trinity//

That is perhaps a little concerning

From this side of the pulpit //////////////

Because those seeing a new dawning

Are looking in my direction //////

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{PICK UP NEXT SHEET PREPARE TO TURN TO ALTAR}



When we all need to look toward the altar

Toward the Cross of Jesus Christ *////*

Toward the Good News of the Risen Jesus *//////////*

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Even among a group that had been

With Jesus Christ Himself

It seems that it took a little while

to get things started

How much longer

Will it take to get things started,

With a mere servant of the most high

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I often like to anchor a sermon in time

Examine the previous week's readings

See where a reading dwelled in time and place

Ironically, unless I examine a bulletin from last week's

Resurrection Sunday Service

I don't know what you heard regarding

The resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

There are several accounts that you may have heard

Perhaps you heard from Mark ///

Jesus was seen by Mary Magdalene

And those who had been with Jesus

Did not believe her

When she proclaimed the Risen Lord

Or you heard that Jesus appeared to two

Disciples walking about in the country

But the remaining disciples still did not believe.

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Maybe you heard from Matthew

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary

Went to see the tomb.

AND THERE WAS AN EARTHQUAKE!

And an angel like lightning rolled back the

stone and sat on it!

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Or perhaps you heard a message from John

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb

And saw that the stone had been removed

So, she told Simon Peter and another

And “Peter, and the other disciple set out

toward the tomb

And they saw the linen wrappings in the tomb

But Mary stayed outside weeping

Before seeing her resurrected Lord.”

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If you heard from Luke,

you may have heard of two disciples

Walking to a village called Emmaus

They asked Jesus to stay with them

(Though they did not know it was him)

And while He was at table;

He took the bread, blessed it, broke it

And gave it to them ...

And their eyes were opened ... And He was gone ///



My dilemma in speaking to you this day

Is ironic, because, it mirrors

The exact problem of the disciples

In our Gospel reading today



What had they heard?

Who had they heard from?

What was true?

What did they know?

Where could they turn????



The women and the disciples had heard a lot

They heard it from many different sources

None of it sounded like it could possibly be true

Given all they knew....

So now they turned to each other ...



It was evening on that day ...

The first day of the week

(The first day of REBORN life!)

And the doors of the house

Where the disciples had met, were locked...

For fear of the Jews

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And Jesus came and stood among them

Saying "Peace be with you"

And He showed them His hands ...

And His Side

And they rejoiced

And Jesus said again, "Peace be with you," //////////////////////////////////

But one was missing,

My favorite disciple, Thomas

Who doubted, like I, (like we), often do!

And Jesus showed Him his scars

And even I, believed!

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We are, of course a few years removed from this story

OK, perhaps a couple millennia!

So perhaps the various events can be a bit confusing

And perhaps we might occasionally be afraid

And that is OK.



Christ's work is revealed slowly

It starts individually, with Mary Magdalene

With a small group of other women

With Peter and another disciple

With another two disciples walking, processing

With the remaining disciples in a locked room

Shaking in fear, locking the door

With one-man Thomas

Who could not believe, unless ...?

He felt Jesus' hands

Felt Jesus' feet

Felt Jesus' side

The first day of reborn life for most Christians

Is likely to begin just as slowly

The first day of reborn life for a Christian Community

Is as likely to begin just as slowly

It is likely to begin individually

One person at a time

One visit, one assurance,

One peaceful encounter at a time.

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And the person who will bring true growth will not be

Mary of Magdalene or even Peter

It won't be me either

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The person who will bring true growth

Is the Resurrected Jesus

For it is Christ who enters in

And from Christ's words,

And from Christ's gentle actions

From Christ's //// Peace //// Among us

We will feel His presence

And We will feel compelled

To proclaim his Gospel /////

And we will proclaim that Gospel

Not as mere servants,

(For the servant knows not what the master is doing)

We will proclaim the Good News of Jesus as friends

Just as His first friends

His disciples proclaimed that Gospel

We will proclaim despite tyrannical oppression

From a murderous High Priest

And his henchmen, Who

GAVE STRICT ORDERS NOT TO TEACH IN HIS NAME

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It was, after all, by showing forth

That all the friends of Christ have ever

Professed the faith



At the beginning of this sermon

I proclaimed that **today is a day of celebration**

Yet I continue to proclaim equally **loudly**

That **TODAY IS NOT A DAY OF CELEBRATION**

Because this congregation has seen

Its new hope in a mere servant of Christ

Today is NOT a day of celebration because

Some earthly herald or prophet

Or even in some angel!

Has proclaimed it so



Today is a day of celebration

Because we, even like Thomas,

Have seen that:

GOD IS NOT DEAD!

GOD IS TRULY ALIVE!

And we have been assured of that by Jesus himself

Each of us, in our own lives

In our own stories

In Jesus' own way!

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Yet if we have not seen **that** truth

The truth of Christ's bodily resurrection

from the dead

If we have doubts,

We have more Good News!

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Jesus not only died for us and lives for us

But if we just admit to him and to each other

That we have doubts;

Jesus, through His Holy Spirit,

Will enter our lives

Show us His hands, His feet, and His side

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Our Triune God **will**

Enter our discussions

He will walk us through His crucifixion,

Giving us the Holy Spirit

HE, will forgive us our sins ///

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If we ask HIM to stay with us

At His table; He will take the bread,

Bless it, Brake it; And give it to us ...

So our eyes may be opened ...

And He may **remain** with us //////////////////////////////////

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Today is a day of celebration

For the Christian Church

For this parish

And for this City of Vickburg

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For on this Sunday in the Season of Easter

God Himself has spoken.

This is a day of celebration!

And it has served as such

Since the time of Jesus Himself;

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This day in the city of Vicksburg

(To paraphrase another preacher,)

This day, there is another voice to be heard

Another claim for human life

//// Let the forces of evil be forever on notice! ////

God has not abandoned the poor

God has not abandoned the stranger

God has not abandoned the Lonely,
The captive, the desperate
God has not abandoned any of us,
To be victimized

By those who traffic in greed and power



God has entered this world

Been crucified by it
Yet overcame it



And to all those who try to say,

WE GAVE YOU STRICT ORDERS
NOT TO TEACH IN JESUS NAME,

Let them be on notice, that we

The disciples the One Lord, Jesus Christ
“We must obey God

Rather than any human authority!”



Today **may** mark a new dawn for the Church of the Holy Trinity

And though from this side of the pulpit

There may be reason for concern

Especially if many seeing a new way

Are looking in my direction /////
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Yet any such concern is quickly dissipated



{PICK UP NEXT SHEET PREPARE TO TURN TO ALTAR}



When we look toward the cross on the altar

// Actually, when we look BEYOND

Even that Cross, and look instead

on the Risen Jesus ////

It is then that we shall see the Alpha and the Omega

The Beginning and the End

The one who is and who was and who is to come-

The Almighty

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And by looking to the Almighty God

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

We will proclaim His Gospel

We WILL Proclaim his Good News

{DROP THE MIKE}