

John 20:19-31 Thomas/Relationship 2020

I thank you especially for being with me today,
 which is the least attended Sunday of the church year.
 It's been called 'Low Sunday.' Or, 'Doubting Thomas' Sunday.
 Every year for the Sunday after Easter we get this same lesson.
 And, I think it's because it's just that important.
 What it says about ***us and the Easter message*** is just that important.

It's the day of the resurrection and Jesus came to the disciples behind their locked doors.
 And, a week later, they were still locked up in that room, behind those closed doors.
 Even though Jesus had come to them and they knew him,
 they were still a closed room containing a closed community; closed off by their fear.
 Fear – sometimes healthy, but also the opposite of trust.

We aren't told why Thomas wasn't with the disciples that day.
 I imagine he was deeply discouraged and disappointed,
 and trying to reconcile what had happened with what he had hoped for.
 When he returned to the disciples and heard the accounts of Jesus' appearance,
 even from Peter, a leader, Thomas was skeptical.

Isn't it a human characteristic to want proof? To have a reason to believe?
 The human mind searches for order: to make sense of things, to understand the world,
 to organize all the data that comes to our awareness.
 Faith, on the other hand, is a mystery of the heart that the mind wants to solve.
 In the Easter season, we Christians celebrate the biggest mystery of faith –
 the mystery of the resurrection.

Today's passage ends with:

*'But these [signs] 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.'*

I'm sure most all of you know by now that when I see the word 'believe' in scripture,
 I like to substitute the word 'trust.'

'Believe' has taken on meaning for us that wouldn't have existed when it was written.
*'But these are written so that you may come to trust that Jesus is the Messiah,
 the Son of God, and that through trusting you may have life in his name.'*

Thomas doubted. He didn't trust what the others told him.
 And, what did Jesus do, when Thomas displayed this oh-so-human desire for proof?
 Jesus did not condemn him, or give up on him, because had doubts.
 He helped him; **'Put your hands here. Touch and feel.'**
 After this generous and compassionate gesture by the risen Christ,
 comes the deepest, strongest, most profound expression of faith
 we are given anywhere in Scripture: **'My Lord and my God!'**
 Thomas knew that Jesus cared enough to give him what he needed.
 And, Jesus still does care enough to give us what we need.

When John says, "so that you may trust," he means
so that you might enter into or be assured of your relationship with Jesus.
 Belief – or trust – in John's gospel is never a noun, but always a verb,
 and believing in Jesus is to be in relationship with Jesus. That's why I like 'trust.'
 Aren't relationships built on trust?

We're not about the guarantee of life after death;
 nor are we about some "done deal" by God;
 our gospels promise a relationship with God that not even death can bring to an end.
 Resurrection has to be the promise of abundant life with God -- forever AND now.
 That's salvation for John -- relationship with Jesus, with God, here and now.
 Resurrection is relationship. A relationship that will never be broken,
 that will never be abandoned, that will never know separation, and will forever be.

'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to trust.'
 Trust – an antidote to fear. This is the truth, the grace, the gospel of John 20:30-31.
 The point of God's revealed self in the Word made flesh, crucified, resurrected, ascended,
 is the commitment, like no other, to show what true relationship means.

Can we believe in something – can we **trust** something – that we cannot touch and feel?
 Can we touch and feel the risen Christ?
 Can we not taste and feel the risen Christ when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist?

Yes, of course we can. That love – the essence of our relationship with the risen Christ –
 is also present in our relationships, infusing them with love and trust,

when we are open to it.

Don't you yearn – as do I – for the time when we are able to return to our church, and each other, for worship and relationship?

It's not about our doubts, which are a part of faith.

It's about God, love, and trust. Resurrection is relationship.

Thank you, Lord Jesus. Thank you, God.