

Easter 2 Year A – April 19, 2020

John 20:19-31

Epiphany, Winnipeg

Rev. Paul Sartison

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Halleluia!

It's great good news but when Thomas hears the news he just can't believe it. Instead he says, "until I see what you've seen and touch the one you've touched and hear the one you've heard I won't believe it." Just like you or I would say.

For a thousand and more years – I'm really not sure how long – we seem to have been picking on Thomas and he's been called "Doubting Thomas," as though any one of us would just believe it if we heard that our friend who died was alive again.

It's kind of like this: Some time down the road there will be news that a vaccine has been found – they say it will be months, maybe a year or more. It will be great news, and everywhere people will breathe a sigh of relief...but there will be more than a few people who will say that they will believe it when they can see that it works. When word comes that we can step out of our homes freely and mix with one another again and invite our friends over and go back to school or work and it will all be OK, chances are that a lot of us, like me, will step out cautiously and will take a long time to see if maybe it's true. And there will be that voice somewhere inside that says "It's going to take more than hearing it from someone else for me to believe it. I've got to see it." We're just cautious about hearing good news, like when we hear that the disease is cured or that the one who stopped loving you loves you again; like when we hear that the war is over...or that spring has come. Maybe it's not all doubt. It's just caution.

Maybe Thomas is just our brother, our kindred spirit who says with us, "I will believe it when I see it, really see it, and touch it and hear it."

It's day one when Thomas hears this news. That very morning Mary Magdalene, the first preacher, told the disciples that Jesus is risen. Only a few hours later they are behind locked doors and are afraid. It's like they've said to Mary, "Until we see what you've seen, we won't believe." And then they do see. And they believe. And they tell Thomas. And he won't believe until he sees.

Eight days later he does see. Eight days later he believes.

Maybe we always live with Thomas between that first day and the eighth day. We've heard the news like we did last weekend, in the living room or at the dining room table or in bed in your pyjamas and the laptop sitting right there... wherever you were when we celebrated Easter online together. We heard the news and it was certain and assuring. Some of us might have said with great conviction, "Yes! Christ has risen indeed!" But then the next days happened, with all the fears or disappointments or tragedies or whatever they might have brought our way. And even though we've joined in saying, "We have seen the Lord! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" maybe today a few of us find ourselves saying something more like what Thomas said – "until I see it and touch it and hear it again it's just too hard to believe." And we need to hear it again. And again. And again.

And Christ keeps showing up in the locked room again. And again. And again.

Maybe you noticed that all the disciples are like that too. One week they're in a locked room and they see and touch and hear and believe and tell that news that Christ is risen. Eight days later, they're back in that room again. The doors are not locked, but they're still closed, and maybe even they are thinking again, "Well, yah...but until I see and touch and hear again...."

We've heard the news of that first day – Christ is risen - and we know that the promise of the eighth day will come and we will see clearly with Thomas that it's true, even if we only see it for a moment or two. And in the meantime, maybe just look for glimpses of resurrection or signs of new life or just something new that might be popping up around you.

Little things. Here on the prairies crocuses will appear soon if they haven't already. Geese are coming home and making a racket and soon there will be little goose babies, new life... People bang pots and pans at 7:30 in the evening to show love and gratitude, in Italy someone sings opera from the balcony for the neighbours and everyone hears that beauty still lives in the midst of fear. Alberta is sending personal protective equipment to Ontario and Quebec...and how powerful a sign is that that life and generosity are stronger than a climate of fear now or a climate of division during an election only a few months ago? There are signs of resurrection and newness all around...even just little things.

And maybe even those little things are signs for us of the risen Christ who won't be kept out of the room by some closed doors and some fear. Even those little things are signs for us – we can see them and touch them and hear them – signs of the risen Christ who comes into the world and into the room, where he breathes his Spirit on us and says, again and always, “Peace be with you.”

AMEN.