

Sermon for April 27th, 2014

First Sunday after Easter, John 20:19-31

Christ is Risen!!! He is Risen Indeed!!! Alleluia

The Holy Spirit is **so** awesome!!! The other day when I was driving back from my dad's house I was **praying** regarding what I would preach about in the sermon for this morning. My **usual** way of preparing is to pray and be aware of any guidance that the Holy Spirit might **give** me in how to **approach** the text; **especially** one like this one with so much going on in it.

On that particular morning I had my radio on to some **random** station. The next song which came on was one from a number of years ago which is entitled, "***I Saw the Sign***". Some of the lyrics go, "*I got a new life, you would hardly recognize me, I'm so glad. Life is demanding without understanding. I saw the sign and it opened up my eyes, I saw the sign.*" I thought that was **so** great; a **perfect** fit for what we read in our gospel reading for this morning.

As you may or may not know John's gospel is also called "*The Book of Signs*". The reading for this morning from this gospel brings us full circle. For John, it tells the **full story** of what his experience with Jesus was. You might remember that the Gospel of John **began** with Jesus coming to this world as the **light** which shone in the darkness, the **true light** of God, the one who **came to all**—all who receive Him and believe in His name had the right to become the

children of God—He was the Word made flesh, the one who came from the Father, full of truth and grace. Now John concludes by giving what the **purpose** of this book was—so that we may come to believe—that Jesus **is** the Messiah, the **Son** of God, and that through **believing** in Him we may have life in His name. Jesus is the eternal and fully divine Word of God. By believing we find **life** in Him who is the very source of life itself. The circle is complete for John. Jesus has **accomplished** what God sent Him to do. Life, death, resurrection, the Holy Spirit was breathed upon the disciples, and they are to go out into the world in God’s name.

In our reading from the Book of Acts Peter addresses the crowd by telling them of the **deeds** of power, **wonders**, and **signs** that God did through Jesus, of the **definite** plan and **foreknowledge** God had, and how God **raised** Jesus up and **freed** Him from death. Secondly, in **1 Peter**, he continued by writing that through Jesus God gave **new birth**, a **living** hope by raising Jesus from the dead through which comes an inheritance protected by the power of God. Although we have **not** seen him—even though we do not see him now—we **believe** and we are receiving the **outcome** of our faith. Rejoice with an indescribable joy writes Peter. *“I got a new life, you would hardly recognize me, I’m so glad.”*

But what about the **question** of faith and belief in that which we have **not** seen? Is that **not** what we are also hearing about this morning? Having faith without seeing is **not always** an easy thing to have—just ask Thomas. Thomas

was not the only one who wanted to see for himself. In reality did he ask for anything more than the other disciples got? If we look at this whole gospel reading for today there were many other signs—or needs for verification of what happened.

Just before our reading it says; early on the **first** day of the week—Mary went to the tomb, **saw** the stone rolled away—ran and told Simon Peter and the disciple Jesus loved. Those 2 ran to the tomb—**bent** down, **looked** in, **saw** the linen wrappings, the disciple Jesus loved went in—**saw and believed**. Mary later **saw** 2 angels, **saw** Jesus, went **back** to the disciples and announced, *“I have seen the Lord”*. That very same evening as the disciples crouched behind closed, locked, doors in **fear** that the Jews would be looking for them Jesus came and stood among them, offered them peace, **showed** them his hands and side. Thomas was **not** with them that night but when he did come the disciples told him the same thing Mary had told them about seeing Jesus. *“We have seen the Lord.”* I believe Thomas’ response was a very human response, *“I want to see too so I can believe like you guys do. Because I am not going to believe it until I see it for myself.”*

We jump ahead one week, **same** house, but this time Thomas **was** with the disciples. Doors shut, Jesus came and stood among them, offered them peace, He turned to Thomas and said, **not** in a mean or accusatory manner, but simply said, *“Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”*

We now hear Thomas say what is called **“the high point of John’s gospel. Thomas’ Christological confessions”** (these are truths which are confessed about Jesus). He says, *“My Lord and My God.”* Thomas is the **first** person in this gospel to look at Jesus and address the name ‘*God*’ **directly** to him. **This** is what John’s gospel has been working toward from the beginning. *“The Word made flesh.”* *“I saw the sign and it opened up my eyes, I saw the sign.”*

As I said earlier John concludes by telling us Jesus did **many other** signs while His disciples were around which were **not** written down. John in his simple telling of what he saw and experienced were written so that **WE** may come to believe that Jesus **is** the Messiah, the **Son** of God, and that through believing **WE** may have life in His name.

Faith and belief—*Life is demanding without understanding.* Thomas doubted but came to believe much like the beloved disciple did in verse 8 where it says—*‘He saw and believed’*. But Jesus’ question **begs** to be asked of us, *‘Have you believed because you have seen? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’*

The trials of faith that come our way are part and parcel of our Christian life. But we Christians are **Easter** people. By that I mean that even though we have **not** seen Jesus in the flesh and blood we have faith and believe that Jesus **is** the Messiah, that He **is** the Son of God. We have faith in the unseen. Faith in

something beyond ourselves. The resurrection was **not** some unknown power breaking into this world. The resurrection is what happened when the **creator God**, Himself, came to heal and restore His world. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ **God** has brought **new** life and **light** to this world.

Death has been conquered, **Jesus** has been risen. Even though we do **not** see Him with our own eyes—we **love** Him, we **believe** in Him. We are receiving the **outcome** of our faith—the **salvation** of our souls. *“We got a new life, you would hardly recognize us, we are so glad”*. All thanks be to God. **AMEN**