

The Lord be with you!

Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt may we who have not seen have faith in you and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing who lives and Reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God now and forever Amen

John 20:19–31 (NRSV) When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these 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.

Grace and peace to you from God our father and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ he is risen he is risen indeed alleluia we have this this gospel lesson occurs just the week well actually later on the same evening of the first Easter we're looking at two different Sundays here the first Easter Sunday later on after Mary had already witnessed that Jesus had risen from the dead and she did as Jesus told her to go and tell his brothers and so she was obedient she did and yet they were still locked up for fear of the Jewish elders *let's be clear about this because for many centuries sadly, unfortunately those passages were often used as excuses for anti-Semitism* but actually what they're talking about are the scribes, the Pharisees the members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court, also consisting of the chief priests. Certainly most of the first Christians were all Jewish so just to clarify that.

But what we do have here and it's just wonderful because much of the aspects of what we hear in this lesson are things that we do in worship all the time - sharing the peace. Jesus

says when he answers the first thing he says after he kind of probably shocks and frightens them right? Jesus says peace be with you after he comes and stands among them and says peace be with you and after he says this, he shows them his hands and his side. This is important after he shows them his hands and his side the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord and Jesus said to them again peace be with you. Now one of the things that is often highlighted about this, and we will get to it, is good old Thomas - often referred to as doubting Thomas. It's probably more accurate to call him at least in this lesson unbelieving Thomas and we'll get to that but another thing that's very important about this and is not often highlighted is that the emphasis is placed and we know why part of it is the emphasis that is placed on Jesus showing his hands and his side is to let them know that they are not seeing some apparition, some vision, some mirage, some hologram. They're actually seeing Jesus in the flesh. Jesus in the flesh and blood that was the same body crucified on that cross; that gruesome thing that they had witnessed. It was actually that Jesus that same Jesus who is risen, **HE IS RISEN, INDEED. ALLELUIA!** That same Jesus who has risen and come to be with them and not some impostor. This also connects us to a very key lesson that we remember hearing around Holy Week we remember hearing it's one of the ones appointed for Good Friday it's probably one of the ones I read during the Tenebrae that lesson of the suffering servant from Isaiah 53 starting at verse three we hear from Isaiah "He was despised and rejected by men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. ***Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace*** and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people and they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth.

In the NRSV it reads "upon him was the chastisement that made us whole." Now in a way the word *Shalom* means both things peace and wholeness and of course when you're at peace you feel like you are whole. One of the things that "Shalom" means is that our accounts are settled so just so you know that's a little bit of Hebrew background but point being that in both ways that Jesus reconciled us to his father in dying on the cross

for us and that this passage in John points out in a very explicit fashion points us right back to that Isaiah 53 passage that by his wounds we are healed and so when he says peace be with you and then shows them his hands and his side and says again peace be with you it's kind of like an exclamation point that the transgressions all of our transgressions all of our sins were atoned for on the cross by Christ especially now that he is risen, HE IS RISEN, INDEED. ALLELUIA!

And so as we go on of course we do hear about Thomas. We do hear that he hears this wonderful news from his brothers from the disciples and he feels left out. He missed the gathering the week before. We don't know exactly why, and rather than try to peg him with all kinds of imaginary sins (or whatever?) maybe he was going out shopping for them? Maybe he was getting provisions? We have no idea but what we do know is he was absent from the gathering and so, unfortunately, he missed seeing the risen Lord and so when they came to him with reports that he had indeed been risen the other disciples tell Thomas, "we have seen the Lord." He says to them, "unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side I will not believe." In a way we can kind of understand that. I mean the other disciples, they had heard from Mary, an eyewitness account that Jesus had risen but Thomas was kind of like a citizen of Missouri, right? It's like he was from "the show me state." If I don't see it I don't believe it. seeing is believing and so Jesus comes yet again. Chances are he was probably planning to see the disciples again anyway and we can see in this lesson how it establishes a pattern and we can look back on this as these as the first Sundays after he was risen and that pattern -- that pattern of worshipping on the first day of the week being the first day (also the first day of creation) we see this pattern develop that the church has followed ever since and so the week later Jesus' disciples were again in the house and Thomas was with them and although the doors were shut Jesus came and stood among them and said peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas "put your fingers here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "my Lord and my God!" So we don't even hear (John doesn't even tell us) and that's kind of a marvelous feature of this Gospel. We can imagine Thomas may indeed have followed Jesus command or maybe, just seeing that Jesus was there and knowing and hearing that Jesus had heard what Thomas demanded before it was enough for Thomas to believe. We don't know. I've often imagined that Thomas, just having heard that Jesus heard his plea and came, (you could almost say Jesus came again just for Thomas) although he came for everyone again for Thomas the first time Thomas was able to witness he was overjoyed and so he fell and worshipped and says "my Lord and

my God!” And Jesus says, “have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

So just as Jesus does throughout the gospel of John he kind of gives a wink (or a nod) to those who are reading the gospel -- to you and me. We get to rejoice that JESUS IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!! This resurrection faith is ours, and for us. Just like Jesus has turned the world upside down, we turn and say that believing is seeing believing in the witnesses of the resurrection, having faith in what they have passed on all these centuries later, and having witnessed the Lord's love in our lives, we are an Easter people. That is something my pastor would often say and yes we are an Easter people. People who rejoice and lay hold of the truth that JESUS IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!! And we will get to celebrate this Easter season for the next 4 Sundays and so we have still much to celebrate and hopefully one of those Sundays might even be in person this has been an odd Lent, Holy Week, and Easter season. And yet we, of course, still cling to these promises now more than ever. We can rejoice as an Easter people that God has seen us through this difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic and that even that pandemic doesn't snuff out the hope that we as Christians share with one another. Because we know that JESUS IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! And by his wounds we are healed. He has made peace for us with God the Father. He has reconciled us and made atonement for our sins so that we may never be distraught or despair about a conscience bound to sin. We know that forgiveness is ours, thanks to all that Christ has done for us on the cross. “And by his wounds we are healed.” And so, as he showed the disciples his wounds on his hands and his side, and he came again to show those wounds to Thomas, we are reminded once again of those beautiful words that Isaiah said about God's suffering servant, the one who would come and be the savior of the world, who would reconcile us to God, the Father. And so, we rejoice that Jesus is risen and we rejoice and with the boldness of faith that both Thomas came to have after at first doubting and Peter as we heard in our lesson from Acts (that I didn't even touch on) that he is emboldened to preach about this risen Christ we too are emboldened to share the good news that JESUS IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!! AMEN!