

2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER  
19th April 2020

## READINGS

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them,

“You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

‘I saw the Lord always before me,  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;  
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover my flesh will live in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
or let your Holy One experience corruption.

You have made known to me the ways of life;  
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

“Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,  
nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

I Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

John 20:19-End

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.

## THE COLLECT

Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## SERMON

Richard Findlinson

This reading follows on from Mary Magdalene seeing Jesus in the garden where she first of all thought he was the gardener and then the report of Peter and John looking into the tomb and seeing it empty. So there was much confusion about what had happened.

However the disciples were still meeting together and on this particular day they were in a locked room (still being very fearful of what had happened and what others might do to them) when Jesus suddenly appeared. Can you imagine what they thought? How would we re-act in such a situation? They thought it was all over, Jesus was dead and the work of their lives over the last few years was all for nought ... and yet here was Jesus again ... what was going on?

Jesus then said, " peace be with you ". This is more than a pleasant greeting. It means " may God give you every good thing ". Then Jesus gave the disciples the commission which the church must never forget. Jesus said that as God had sent him forth, so he sent them forth into the world to spread the Gospel (Good News).

John then says Jesus breathed on his disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt when John wrote this he was thinking back to the old story of the creation of man. In Genesis it says " the Lord formed man of dust and breathed life into him and he became a living being ". The coming of the Holy Spirit is like the waking of life from the dead. When the Holy Spirit comes upon the church she is recreated for her task.

John goes on to explain that Thomas was not there at that time and did not see Jesus. So he said he would not believe unless he saw him and the proof of his damaged hands and side. The original " doubting Thomas "

Thomas expected the cross to happen and indeed when Jesus had proposed going to Bethany after the news of Lazarus's illness his reaction had been " let us also go that we may die with him " The original pessimist! But Thomas never lacked courage. There was never any doubt that he loved Jesus.

When everything happened as he expected Thomas was so broken hearted that he could not meet the eyes of men, but felt he

had to be alone with his grief. However that was his one mistake. He withdrew from Christian fellowship. He sought loneliness rather than togetherness. We miss a great deal when we separate ourselves

from Christian fellowship and try to be alone.

How often are we like Thomas in the various disappointments and setbacks in our lives? At such times it is important to bring everything to God and to immerse ourselves in our Christian fellowship to receive encouragement and blessing.

However Thomas had 2 great virtues. He absolutely refused to say that he understood when he did not or that he believed when he did not. There is an uncompromising honesty about him. He would never still his doubts by pretending that they did not exist.

Thomas's other great virtue was that when he was sure, he went the whole way. " My Lord and my God " he said! What a staggering statement! How would we have reacted if we had been there? There was Thomas (and the rest of the disciples) standing in front of God!

Jesus brought them all down to earth by saying to Thomas because he had seen Jesus he believed but blessed were those (like us) who believed but had not seen.

These events were so momentous that John left the story there. There was nothing else to say.

Do we experience events like this when God shows himself to us or we feel his presence but don't realise or acknowledge it? It can, in my experience, be so overcoming that we feel we have to move on and, perhaps, that we should not be in that situation. It is all too much. However I think we should be prepared to just stay in the moment.....

We do not know for sure what happened to Thomas after this but there is an apocryphal book called " The Acts of Thomas " which purports to give his history. It is, of course, only legend but there may well be some history beneath the legend, and certainly in it Thomas is true to character.

This story includes;

The disciples divided up the world among them and India fell by lot to Thomas. At first, he refused to go but God eventually persuaded him.

The king asked Thomas to build him a palace and gave him plenty of money to do it. However Thomas gave the money away to the poor. The king was very angry but eventually he understood what Thomas had done and why and became a Christian. So Thomas brought Christianity to India.

I would like to finish with a very brief prayer.

Lord I believe, help my unbelief ... Amen.

## A HYMN

Alleluia! Alleluia! Hearts to heav'n and voices raise

By: Christopher Wordsworth

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Hearts to heaven and voices raise.  
sing to God a hymn of gladness,  
sing to God a hymn of praise:  
he who on the cross a victim  
for the world's salvation bled,  
Jesus Christ, the King of Glory,  
now is risen from the dead.

Christ is risen, Christ the first-fruits  
of the holy harvest field,  
which will all its full abundance  
at his second coming yield:  
then the golden ears of harvest  
will their heads before him wave?  
ripened by his glorious sunshine  
from the furrows of the grave.

Christ is risen, we are risen.  
shed upon us heavenly grace,  
rain, and dew, and gleams of glory  
from the brightness of thy face.  
that we, with our hearts in heaven,  
here on earth may fruitful be,  
and by angel-hands be gathered,  
and be ever, Lord, with thee.

Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Glory be to God on high.  
alleluia to the Saviour,  
who has won the victory.  
alleluia to the Spirit,  
fount of love and sanctity.  
Alleluia! Alleluia  
to the Triune Majesty.