

APRIL 8, 2018
Easter 2
ILC, Wichita, KS
John 20: 19-31; "Faith to believe"

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

My good friends in Christ. The text which forms the basis for my message this morning is taken from the Gospel. I would like to reread the first two verses. If you would like to follow along... it is the third full paragraph of the Gospel.

From the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 20, verses 24 and 25 we read:

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ. Have you ever had a time in your life when someone told you something that just seemed so outrageous that ... you said:

I don't believe you?

Such an incident took place in my life a couple of years ago.

My sister Claudia and my Mother live in a community named, Indialantic, Florida. It is an island off the Florida mainland about 1 hour east of Orlando. Two of my sisters' adult children also live on this island. They don't live with my sister, but close by.

My sister has one daughter... Meridith.

... Meridith... was out jogging on the beach... when she caught a 45 pound Cobia fish... by hand.

When Meridith excitedly called me and told me this news... I said...

I don't believe you?

You cannot catch a 45 pound fish... by hand.

I don't believe you!

Have you ever found yourself at a time in your life when you have uttered those words?

If you have ever found yourself in a situation like that then you can understand what is going on in the life of Thomas in today's Gospel lesson.

As we take a closer look at the Gospel for today...

There are two points that I would invite you to reflect upon. They are:

- (1) Thomas was missing from the gathering of the disciples;
- (2) Yet....Thomas wanted to believe in the resurrection.

Introduction: The setting for today's Gospel is Easter Sunday. Our Lord's disciples ... and we... are so overwhelmed by the events of Easter morning, that is, our Lord's resurrection from the grave that sometimes the evening of Easter gets overlooked.

But, not in today's Gospel.

- In the Gospel reading for today we find our Lord's disciples gathered together.
- They are all still in kind of a state of shock and great fear.
- The Gospel tells us that the disciples have the doors locked. Our Lord's disciples are afraid that the leaders of their day might think that they have stolen Christ's body from its tomb and so they have the doors locked.
- They are all gathered together...

I. In the 3rd paragraph of today's Gospel we hear these words. ²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

Thomas was missing from the gathering of the disciples when Christ came and stood in their midst.

Have you ever wondered... why was Thomas missing?

A. Perhaps Thomas had been both astonished and fearful of Judas betrayal of Christ. Thomas had been present when Christ identified Judas as his betrayer. Thomas had been present in the Garden of Gethsemane when Judas betrayed Christ into the hands of the civil and religious authorities.

Because of Judas' betrayal, could Thomas have felt:

- Was Thomas astonished that Judas could betray Christ?
- Was Thomas afraid... that maybe... he too... might betray Christ?

-- Was Thomas so overwhelmed that he decided he wanted nothing more to do with this movement?

Could the betrayal by Judas have had a negative an impact on Thomas and the other disciples?

B. Let's move beyond Judas' betrayal to... Peter's denial.

-- Shortly after Christ was arrested by the Temple guard they took Christ to the palace of the High Priest of the Temple.

-- Some of the disciples, including Peter followed from a distance. -- While in the courtyard a citizen identifies Peter as a follower of Christ.

-- Peter denies Christ, not just once, but three times.

Denial is a devastating experience!

Because of Peter's denial, could Thomas have felt?

Could the denial of Christ by Peter have had a negative effect upon Thomas?

Betrayal and denial... sadly... it is a part of the human life.

II. So let's move to point # 2...It is important to remember that Thomas wants to believe in Christ. In verse 25 we hear the disciples say, "We have seen the Lord!"

-- The disciples then go on to share their experience that they had with Christ with Thomas

--- Thomas responds by saying he needs physical proof Christ is alive.

-- Thomas needs to place his fingers in the nail marks of Christ hands and in his side.

-- Christ returns a week later to be with his disciples.

-- This time Thomas is with them... [a sign that Thomas wants to believe.](#)

Thomas places his finger into the nail marks of Christ's hand and into the spear wound in Christ's side and realizes it truly is Christ.

Thomas then speaks those beautiful words of faith: **"My Lord and my God."**

The bottom line is...

Thomas wanted to believe in the resurrection...yet he needed physical proof that Christ is alive.

B. We too want physical proof of Christ's healing for us. Christ gives us this proof in the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion. When we receive the true body and the true blood of Jesus Christ... we have physical proof that Christ is

alive. In Holy Communion we have physical proof that Christ has defeated sin, Satan and eternal death.

In Holy Communion you and I are given healing and new hope.

We are given physical proof of Christ.

C. Now, sometimes I give you little assignments with my sermons. This is my assignment to you today.

When you reach those times in your life like Thomas, when you either doubt the Lord... or when you need physical proof of Christ...

Come to Communion!

Receive the true body and the true blood of our Lord.

And when you come to communion today... look for the true body and the true blood of Christ... and when you receive communion say a prayer of thanksgiving. Thank Christ for giving you Himself!

Don't be a doubter... but instead ... believe...

And because I often times forget to end my little stories... what happened with my niece Meridith, and her 45 pound Cobia fish that she caught by hand.

Well... sure enough... Meridith did catch this fish ... by hand.

She had been out jogging on the beach... when she saw that this fish had been trapped in a little enclosure of water by the receding tides. Meridith... reached right down and grabbed that fish.

She took a picture of Meridith and her prize fish... and this photo wound its' way into the newspaper...

Needless to say... Uncle Ronnie ... had to tell his niece Meridith that she could catch a 45 pound fish... using only her hands!

I believe!

May you believe also. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.