

**Service for Sunday, April 19, 2020**  
**Today's Service is provided by the Eastern North Dakota Synod of the ELCA**  
**as a gift given to the Pastors and Congregations of the Synod.**

**Since many of you are unable to watch and hear the Synod worship service, lessons, short message, and prayers for this day are provided for your devotion.**

**Greeting**

In today's gospel the risen Christ appears to the disciples and offers them the gift of peace. Even amid doubts and questions, we experience the resurrection in our Sunday gathering here and in our everyday lives. Even as the early Christians proclaimed the resurrection, we rejoice in the new birth and living hope.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**The Word**

The first reading today is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of Acts:

<sup>14a</sup>Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd], <sup>22</sup>“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—<sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. <sup>25</sup>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;

<sup>26</sup>therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover my flesh will live in hope.

<sup>27</sup>For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
or let your Holy One experience corruption.

<sup>28</sup>You have made known to me the ways of life;  
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

<sup>29</sup>“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. <sup>30</sup>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. <sup>31</sup>Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,

nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

<sup>32</sup>This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.” (Acts 2:14a, 22-32)

Today’s Gospel is from the 20th Chapter of John: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>19</sup>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.” <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

<sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>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.”

<sup>26</sup>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.” <sup>27</sup>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.” <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup>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.”

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>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. (John 20:19-31)

The Word of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **A Brief Message**

When Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room, Thomas, one of the 12, was not present. Jesus came to them a second time and Thomas was there. And he did not believe it was the Lord until he was able to touch Jesus’ hands and side, seeing and feeling the scars from Jesus’ crucifixion. Thus, Thomas is labeled with the name “Doubting Thomas.” That may seem appropriate but perhaps it is unfair.

Think about that for a moment. Last week Mary raced to the disciples telling Peter and the one whom Jesus loved about what she had seen: An empty tomb and Jesus in the garden. Those two disciples questioned if the “phantom” Jesus, the One they lived with, knew, and loved, was really the resurrected Lord. So not only did Thomas question and wonder, so did the

other disciples. For when Jesus entered the place where the disciples were staying, He came through a locked door. No wonder they feared.

Wouldn't you have been the same? Wouldn't you have wondered if you were seeing things or if this incident was actually the risen Jesus. So maybe we need to look at Thomas' doubting in a different light. Maybe he was looking for the same thing the disciples had witnessed previously, the ghostly Christ who had entered the locked room the week before. Do you suppose that Thomas wanted that same experience, that same wonder, the other disciples had experienced? That seems fair. Yes, it seems true, looking at this from the perspective of Thomas.

I certainly would have asked for the same thing the other disciples had seen the week prior. For we, in our humanness, especially today, with all the scientific knowledge around us, tend to look at things from a perspective of needing proof. That doesn't mean we don't love God (in the Son). What that means is we are human, with all our doubts and feelings. And Jesus knew this. He knew this about his disciples and he knows this about us. His followers needed something to hold on to, to understand, to grasp, when they were filled with fear. Fear is why they were locked in a room – fear that what had happened to Jesus would also happen to them.

In today's world, so many are faced with ostracism, persecution, horror, and hatred. Jesus rose so the disciples would hear and share the promise of a better life. And this message is given to each of us: The love of the One God and the promises we receive from this God. Jesus comes to teach all to live in the love of God, whom Jesus has come to share. This love is for all, not to be kept to ourselves in our own hidden spaces, but to be shouted to all in praise and glory.

The resurrection of the Lord and his appearing to those in the world at that time is not about the Thomas who doubts. It is about living and sharing the experience of Jesus in the here and now. It is about sharing the eternal promise of life and forgiveness. It is about our responsibility to love as we have been loved, making lives better for those who suffer, and about reconciling communities and lives with one another and with the God who loves all.

HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

### **Prayers of the People**

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

Open the doors we close, O God, when we fear those who worship you in different ways. Guide us to unity and harmony so that we may come to respect and cherish our commonalities. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the paths we ignore, O God, when we prioritize financial gain and convenience over listening to the groaning of the earth. Inspire all to care for the world you have made so that living things might thrive. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the rooms we lock, O God, to those who live without a homeland or place of safety. We pray that generous nations offer refuge and peace for all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the hearts we close, O God, to the cries of those in pain. We pray for those isolated physically or emotionally through incarceration, addiction, mental illness, chronic suffering, grief, and all in need, especially Hazel Spiering, who is hospitalized, and Bob Turner, who is ill. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the ways of love, O God, in the pursuit of peace throughout the world, and bless the efforts of missionaries, healthcare professionals, activists for women and children, and relief workers, especially those who find themselves in harm's way. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the ways of healing, O God, to those who suffer from the COVID virus. Give comfort and peace to those who have lost loved ones to this global pandemic, reminding them always in the promises of new life, where one day, you will restore life to all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the way to eternal life, O God, as we remember those who have died in faith. Free us from the fear of death, that we embrace the peace you have promised. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus teaches us.

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

### **Blessing and Sending**

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead  
raise you to new life, fill you with hope,  
and turn your mourning into dancing.

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

Christ is risen, just as he said.

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**