

SA, SL, TS & DSM United Churches

Second Sunday of Easter – April 27th, 2025

Prelude: - by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Talbotstreet.ca and Southbuxton.ca

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: In the rising of the morning sun, the Holy speaks: You are my children. Shine!

People: In the greening of the Earth and blooming of creation, the Holy speaks: You are my children. Grow!

Eric: In the mountains reaching toward the sky, the Holy speaks: You are my children. Stand with strength!

People: In the darkness of the winter days, the Holy speaks: You are my children. Trust!

Eric: In the presence of the skies that float above us and the assurance of the Earth beneath us

People: And with the calm of the Spirit within us, the Holy speaks: You are my children. Live!

**

Opening Hymn: VU 173 “Thine is the Glory”

Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where the body lay.

*Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb!
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom.
Let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth: death hath lost its sting.

*Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is nought without thee: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

*Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won. ***

Opening Prayer:

People: Creator God, you call us to take on the holiness you have planted within us. In our worship this day, open our eyes and hearts to your movement that longs to make a home in us. So be it. Amen.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 118: 14 - 29

The Lord Is Always Merciful

My power and my strength come from the Lord, and he has saved me.

From the tents of God's people come shouts of victory:

"The Lord is powerful! With his mighty arm the Lord wins victories! The Lord is powerful!"

And so my life is safe, and I will live to tell what the Lord has done.

He punished me terribly, but he did not let death lay its hands on me.

Open the gates of justice! I will enter and tell the Lord how thankful I am.

Here is the gate of the Lord! Everyone who does right may enter this gate.

I praise the Lord for answering my prayers and saving me.

The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone.

The Lord has done this, and it is amazing to us.

This day belongs to the Lord! Let's celebrate and be glad today.

We'll ask the Lord to save us! We'll sincerely ask the Lord to let us win.

God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

We praise you from here in the house of the Lord.

The Lord is our God, and he has given us light! Start the celebration!

March with palm branches all the way to the altar.

The Lord is my God! I will praise him and tell him how thankful I am.

Tell the Lord how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful. **

Children's Story:

Children's Song: "Hallelu" X 2

Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord.

Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord. Hallelujah!

Praise ye the Lord. Hallelujah!

Praise ye the Lord. Hallelujah!

Praise ye the Lord. **

Gospel Reading: John 20: 19 - 31

The disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders, and on the evening of that same Sunday they locked themselves in a room. Suddenly, Jesus appeared in the middle of the group. He greeted them and showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they became very happy. After Jesus had greeted them again, he said, "I am sending you, just as the Father has sent me." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive anyone's sins, they will be forgiven. But if you don't forgive their sins, they will not be forgiven."

Although Thomas the Twin was one of the twelve disciples, he wasn't with the others when Jesus appeared to them. So they told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But Thomas said, "First, I must see the

nail scars in his hands and touch them with my finger. I must put my hand where the spear went into his side. I won't believe unless I do this!" A week later the disciples were together again. This time, Thomas was with them. Jesus came in while the doors were still locked and stood in the middle of the group. He greeted his disciples and said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hands! Put your hand into my side. Stop doubting and have faith!" Thomas replied, "You are my Lord and my God!" Jesus said, "Thomas, do you have faith because you have seen me? The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed!" Jesus worked many other miracles for his disciples, and not all of them are written in this book. But these are written so that you will put your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. If you have faith in him, you will have true life. **

Message: "Believing Into Christ"

We all know Thomas as the "doubting" Thomas. We might assume this identity as Jesus' disciple is created from this story. Thomas is largely a background character throughout the Gospel of John, but he does a fair amount to drive the narrative forward. Take the story of Lazarus, for example, when Jesus says, "Let us go to Jerusalem." Thomas says, "Let us also go, that we may die with him".

In this comment Thomas' character shows leadership. Going to Jerusalem would not be a passive journey, according to Thomas. Using the words, "let us go", indicates leadership. Thomas is driving the story forward, with this short sentence that becomes so full of meaning. Thomas' phrase, "Let us also go, that we may die with him," triggers everything that follows in the Gospel of John. Thomas shows leadership.

If we think about it, Thomas' doubt is also alive in the majority of the other disciples! Look at last week's story when Mary's resurrection story is discounted by the disciples. We even have some doubts about some of Jesus' stories. We think we need to figure it all out – that we have to have all the answers.

We try to make sense of Jesus' miracles. Can we accept them for what they are – miracles. Even in our present day miracles, like times when people are totally healed of cancer, we try to explain how it happened. Few doctors are willing to say, "It's a miracle"! We too have our doubts. We know Thomas as "doubting Thomas." We too should add "Doubting" to our name. "Hi, my name is Doubting Eric."

Let examine Thomas' doubts and his encounter with the risen Christ a week later. Thomas wants to see Jesus' wounds – No - Thomas want to touch Jesus' wounds. Thomas needs to feel the wounds to know they are real, and that Jesus is real. Thomas' touch may be more of an intimate feel – maybe like a hug – the

sharing of a brotherly love. Could Thomas not believe, by just seeing his wounds? We are about to find out!

We may note that each time Jesus meets the disciples, Jesus wishes them peace. At many larger church services, the “Passing of the Peace of Christ” becomes part of their worship. Passing the peace could be similar to Thomas needing to touch Jesus’ body. To know this is real – that you are real.

In our rural churches we have already talked to each other before church - we have shook their hands or given them a hug. We have already identified that they are real. We have already checked them out – and the service has not started yet. That is kind of how it was with Thomas. He came to church late. He will have to wait for the greetings and touches. We know the greetings and touches will come, but Thomas has to wait. Thomas wants proof that Jesus is back from the dead, before he can trust what his friends are saying.

It is a week later when Thomas gets his proof. Jesus appears to the disciples again and wishes them peace – then Jesus looks right at Thomas, calls his name, and invites Thomas to touch his wounds. Thomas a week earlier was so determined to see Jesus and touch his wounds, but now that Jesus is in front of him, addresses him directly and by name, Thomas no longer needs to touch the wounds. Jesus shows up and calls us by name, and we are good to go – we believe. We like Thomas, may even have an epiphany. We too might shout those words, “You are my Lord and my God!”

“Doubting Thomas” is the first disciple to say out loud, “Jesus is Lord and God”. Jesus replies, “Thomas, do you have faith because you have seen me? The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed!” It is suggested that the Greek word is best translated as “happy,” “content,” or “at peace”. At peace — is this the kind of peace Jesus gives us? We may know people who have that simple kind of faith, the kind that doesn’t ask questions or have doubts or require evidence – these people can be pretty undisturbed, blissfully happy, even. But is that the goal for all of us?

The United Church encourages us to ask the questions – maybe even to look and see – touch if you can. Can we be a “Doubting Eric” and still believe? Does doubt erode our conviction of faith? Are we less of a Christian? Are we really a believer if we doubt? What is John trying to tell us? Should we all believe without seeing,

without reasoning or questioning? I don't think anyone in the Easter story believes like that. It takes Jesus' voice to bring Mary around to recognition. Peter and the other disciple require a glimpse into the tomb, and even then they don't understand. The other disciples need Jesus to show up miraculously in their midst. Thomas' request to see and touch the resurrected Jesus is another way that Thomas and us, might move from doubt to belief in order to follow Jesus.

We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God!

Reflection Hymn: VU 185 "You Tell Me That the Lord is Risen"

You tell me that the Lord is risen,
 that you have seen his face.
Then tell me why you crouch in fear
 and hide within this place.
You say that he spoke words of peace
 and stood just as before.
But 'til I touch his very flesh
 I will not trust your joy.

You claim a resurrection here,
 that God has broken death.
No easy words like these will soothe
 the pain that tears my breath.
How well do I recall his face,
 compassion, strength in fear.
How deep my grief that he should die.
 Spare me your words of cheer!

'Now peace be with you. Come, my friend,
 my wounded body see.
Let the rich courage of your doubt
 bring you to fresh belief.
Fear not to wonder at the Word,
 to search the depths of grace.
Reach out and touch, here is my hand.
 Receive the gift of faith.'

'How blest are they, how fortunate
 who know without the sight.
But Thomas, you are favoured too,
 for searching yields its light.'
So may each pilgrim in the Way,
 each road to Christ be blest,

'til lips declare, 'My Lord and God!',
Christ's body one at last. **

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We offer our gifts so others can also feel your grace. Let us give to share our love with others.

Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: God, from you comes every bounty. Every sacrifice of life that sustains ours is the sacrifice of your beloved. As we return a small part of the bounty you have blessed us with, we pray that it will be used to forge stronger connections among all creation, until the whole world is redeemed by your love. Amen **

Hymn: VU 400 “Listen To Your Children Praying”

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Closing: VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

Rejoice the Lord is King!
Your risen Lord adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing
and triumph evermore.
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!*

Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our sins,
he took his seat above.
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!*

God's kingdom cannot fail;

Christ rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given.

*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!*

Rejoice in glorious hope,
for Christ, the judge, shall come
to glorify the saints
for their eternal home.

*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;
the trump of God shall sound, rejoice! ***

Blessing:

Eric: May we go from this place to embody God's love of all creation. Go in peace to love and serve our God – now and forever more. **

Chorus: VU 213 Chorus

*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;
the trump of God shall sound, rejoice! ***

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth