

Second Sunday of Easter, April 19, 2020, Year A

St. Andrew's Anglican Church – Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 20:19-31

“My Lord and My God”

We find the Apostles hiding from the Temple leadership, in the Upper Room, out of fear. These men will not really realize what has transpired until the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit would bless and empower them beyond even their wildest beliefs. The apostles hightailed it and ran the other way from Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on Thursday when He was arrested were hiding even though they knew that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The Apostles were overjoyed and elated that they had seen the Risen Jesus – but not so much that they were ready to leave and to get up and leave the Upper Room. Even though the Lord greeted them with His peace, the disciples apparently were too stunned to receive the Shalom, or peace from Jesus' initial greeting, because they didn't rejoice until after He proved who He was. When they recognized Him in that “locked” upper room, their joy became so great it just could not be contained.

Not only had the disciples seen the Risen Lord, received their call to ministry, and the power to forgive sins – but they themselves, received new life in the Holy Spirit – breathed upon them by their beloved Master. They must have been ecstatic. They must have been giddy. They must have been very excited, and that is putting it mildly. *But one of them was not there! Thomas.*

Thomas comes back, through that locked door and gets met at the door by his brothers with: “*We have seen the Lord!*” They go on: “He was here, and He gave us the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins.” Can you really relate to Thomas? The rush of emotions: Excitement, then disappointment, sadness, concern, disbelief, or --- Doubt?

Eight days later – on the following week; Jesus came back to that same locked room and said, “*Peace Be with you!*” “*Shalom!*” Thomas is there this time, and Jesus directly addresses him: “*Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.*” Jesus addresses Thomas' concerns, his disappointment, his sadness, his disbelief and most pointedly his doubt. Thomas doesn't even have to touch Jesus. Thomas' reaction is one of wonder, of awe, of humility and amazement - He says: “*My Lord and My God*”

We are truly blessed with these words that we are given here, a very special insight by the Apostle John in this Gospel. Thomas proclaims Jesus as “*My Lord and My God!*” Here, near the end of John's Gospel, we hear the word of the only disciple to actually announce Jesus as God. Others had declared Him the Son of God, and others had called him the Messiah. Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of Man. Thomas said something special!

After Jesus speaks of Thomas' belief in having seen the Risen Lord, Jesus then speaks about other believers and their faith: “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.*” This is special and it gets very personal! Jesus is talking to you; Jesus is talking to me

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as well! Blessed are we! Blessed are we who believe, even though we have not seen! Jesus is telling us that believing is indeed seeing.

How awesome it is that we can see Him and learn from Him when we read and meditate on the complete story of God's hand in the salvation history of all humanity, found in all of God's Written Word – the Holy Scriptures. We can see Jesus when we freely worship, and gather with others – even though we are not in person – but knowing that others are joining in worship with us, just as we are doing today. We can see Him when we repent of our sins and know that we are truly forgiven – as we did this morning at the beginning of Morning Prayer – all because of the sacrifice of Jesus dying in our place. We can see Him when we pray the prayer of Spiritual Communion on page 677 – seeking His presence spiritually, since we cannot receive the Real Presence of Christ physically in the bread and wine – during this horrible pandemic. We are blessed that we live in a land where we can worship in complete and total freedom and that we have the capability to communicate and see God's Word in action through of all things – the internet.

We can show Him to others by spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to others. You might say – how can I do that during 'shelter in place?' Do you have a phone, an iPhone or other device or PC, that you can Facetime or call people? An email with encouraging words can go a very long way to touch another.

We can actively live the words of the Apostle Peter who wrote in his first letter, chapter 1 verses 8 and 9: "*though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*" My dear friends - today's Gospel message is about believing in the Resurrected Jesus and sharing His love with others. John reminds us in his words given at the end of today's Gospel message: "*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.*"

Today, as so very many are in their homes, their "Upper Rooms" – separated from the outside world – for fear of the invisible threat from COVID-19 – I heartily encourage you to ask the Risen Lord Jesus to visit you – and bring you His peace – His shalom, His comfort, provision and His direction. May your welcoming reaction not be one of fear and doubt – but like Thomas - of joy and wonder – "My Lord and My God."