



SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Second Sunday of Easter

April 19, 2019

Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Christ is Risen – Alleluia! He is Risen indeed – Alleluia! Everything that happened to JESUS was under GOD’s control. His plans were never disrupted by the Roman government or the Jewish officials. This was especially comforting to those facing oppression during the time of the early Christian Church.

Peter spoke forthrightly about the resurrection. As Peter preached, the events of CHRIST’s death and resurrection were still headline news – less than 2 months old. CHRIST’s execution had been carried out in public before many witnesses. His empty tomb was available for inspection just a short distance away. If CHRIST had not truly died, Peter’s message would have been laughed at or ignored. If CHRIST had not risen from the dead, authorities could have produced His body

and put an end to this new faith. But Peter and the apostles had witnessed the risen CHRIST. They were changed men and announced the news with great passion and conviction.

Our faith and our credibility also rest on the truth of the empty tomb. Why? For a number of important reasons. According to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection of CHRIST means that He is the Son of GOD and that His word can be trusted. It means that His sacrifice for sin was acceptable to GOD, so we can be completely forgiven it means that our Saviour is alive and active – able to help us in times of need. It also means that one day we, too, will conquer death. The Christian faith rests on the basic fact of the empty tomb. We must never neglect this essential part of the gospel when we share our faith with others.

In his sermon, Peter quoted from Psalm 16: 8-11 – a psalm written by David. He explained that David was not writing about himself, because David died and was buried. Instead, he was writing as a prophet who spoke

of the Messiah who would be resurrected. The audience understood the word “decay” to mean the grave. The emphasis here is that JESUS’ body was not left to decay but was, in fact, resurrected and glorified.

The theme of Psalm 16 is “the joys and benefits of a life lived in companionship with GOD” – something we enjoy now and eternally.

It is human nature to make our own plans and THEN as GOD to bless them. Instead, we should seek GOD’s will FIRST. By constantly thinking about the LORD and His way of living, we will gain insights that will help us make right decisions and live the way GOD desires. Communicating with GOD allows Him to counsel us and give us wisdom.

By saying that he “will not be shaken”, David was talking about the unique sense of security felt by believers. GOD does not exempt believers from the day-to-day-circumstances of life. Believers and unbelievers alike experience pain, trouble and failure at times. Unbelievers though have a sense of helplessness about

life and confusion over their true purpose on earth. Those who seek GOD, however, can move ahead confidently with what they know is right and important in GOD's eyes. They know that GOD will keep them from being moved off His chosen path.

The final 4 verses of this psalm have been quoted by both Peter and Paul in the New Testament. David's heart was glad – he had found the secret to joy. True joy is far deeper than happiness; we can feel joy in spite of our deepest troubles. Happiness is temporary because it is based on external circumstances; but joy is lasting because it is based on GOD's presence within us. As we contemplate His daily presence, we will find contentment. As we come to understand the future, He has for us, we will experience joy. We need to base our lives on GOD, not on our circumstances.

David stated confidently that GOD would not leave him in the grave. Many people fear death because they can neither control nor understand it. As believers, we can be assured that GOD will not forget us when we die. He

will bring us to life again to live with Him forever. Now THAT is real security.

The opening section of 1 Peter highlights the transformation its readers have experienced when they became Christians and points forward to the glory that will be the outcome of their faith. The expression early in the passage: **By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead** – sums up the entire outlook of the letter. The letter urges its readers to live out the holiness that they received in baptism in the present. It does this by reminding them of their life before they became Christians, of their conversion and initiation into the Christian fellowship, and of the future that awaits them. First, Peter establishes the framework for interpreting the present experience of his readers. Baptism comes to mind as we read these verses and can be used as the basis for modern-day Christians to evaluate their journey of faith. It is easier to experience the call to holiness by

which we became Christians and the holiness we hope to share in the future.

In our Gospel passage for today we catch up again with our friend Thomas – who doubted the Resurrection of JESUS until he could see and feel physical proof.

JESUS entered the room and promptly identified Himself with GOD the Father. He told the disciples by whose authority He did His work. Then He passed the job to His disciples of spreading the gospel of salvation around the world. ^Whatever GOD has asked US to do, we need to remember:

1. Our authority comes from GOD; and
2. JESUS has demonstrated by words and actions how to accomplish the job He has given us. As the Father has sent JESUS, so He has sent His followers – including us

In verse 22 JESUS breathed on them and said “Receive the HOLY SPIRIT. This may have been a special filling with the Holy Spirit for the disciples, a foretaste of what all believers would experience from the time of Pentecost

and forever after. To do GOD's work we need the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit – instead of trying to do His work in our own strength. Verse 23 took me back to my ordination as a priest. Following the laying on of hands by Bishop Brian, he gave me a copy of the Bible, saying these words:

Take authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments in the congregation where you are appointed. WHOSE SINS YOU FORGIVE, THEY ARE FORGIVEN; WHOSE SINS YOU RETAIN, THEY ARE RETAINED. Be a faithful minister of the Word of GOD and of His holy sacraments.

The next time JESUS joined the disciples, Thomas was with them. Previously, Thomas had told his friends in verse 25: '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 very clever person has drawn this cartoon of a Zoom meeting of the Disciples. You will; notice that Thomas, in the bottom right hand corner, says: UNLESS HE TURNS ON HIS CAMERA, I

WILL NOT BELIEVE IT. It's the old saying – seeing is believing – but as JESUS says to Thomas in verse 27, after He has turned on His camera – ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ JESUS wasn't hard on Thomas for his doubts – after all, Thomas was a loyal member of the disciples and loyal to JESUS Himself. Doubt has done its good work if it leads to questions and those questions have led to answers – and those answers are accepted. We MUSN'T let doubt lead to stubbornness and pride. When we study the gospels, we learn all we need to know to believe that JESUS is the Messiah, the Son of GOD – through whom we receive salvation and eternal life.



The account of Thomas' doubt overshadows the other experience in today's Gospel reading – namely the gathering of the disciples “on the first day of the week.” This is an image of what we are all doing right now – gathering in our parish communities. Like the first disciples, we need each other each other to affirm and

celebrate our faith. We are truly the signs and wonders of CHRIST the risen LORD in our world. We come to faith through the witness of others. Even when WE doubt, the witness of others strengthens our hope and renews the peace CHRIST promised.

Christ is Risen – Alleluia! He is Risen indeed – Alleluia!



May we pray:

O GOD of enduring mercy, as we rejoice in the everlasting peace of JESUS, may we be worthy witnesses to His presence in the world and bearers of that same peace in all that we say and do. This we pray through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, risen and glorified forever and ever. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqznTugS42Y>