



2nd Sunday of Easter Message - 19th April 2020

Bible Reading: John 20:19-31 New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

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."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The Purpose of John's Gospel

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus gave the disciples the blessing to let people know that their sins are forgiven. Don't you think that this was such a huge responsibility our Lord was giving to his disciples. How can we have been given this gift? Forgiveness is something that I have found in the past very easy to do, it was something that came naturally to me as a child. I somehow accepted people for who they were – human beings. I realised at an early age that people were capable of shouting at each other, saying things that were hurtful to others even my loved ones but that was part of life and is for many people. I would say that I was a quiet child,



I kept things inside of me. I was also a child who liked to do my own thing too. I learned from a young age too that not everyone who appears to be 'nice' are. I didn't realise until I was a lot older that I had learned to keep quiet in situations that could become volatile and that trying to be the go between in difficult situations can place you in a very vulnerable position without the development of skills.

To forgive someone for what they have done to either ourselves or others isn't something that can come easy is it? For some the hurt and pain and the mistrust and learning to trust again sometimes can never happen or can happen but not until a person is brave enough to trust again. But we hear from Jesus if we do not forgive someone then they are not forgiven. WHAT!! I believe in Christ and I trust what he has said but not everyone does. We do not know what Thomas' life was like before he found Christ in his. Here was a situation that needed careful thought and consideration. He had already been hurt and was in pain as he was getting his head around his Lord being dead let alone somehow supposedly appearing to his fellow disciples. I feel that Thomas was being very sensible with his cautiousness. Of course, he believed in his Lord but to believe his mates who, like himself, had betrayed Jesus, could he even believe them and in them again enough to spread the Good News at this time when they appeared to be saying things that just didn't ring true.

Something very trivial happens in our home when Aleck and I and sometimes G and V watch The Chase on TV. We sit there and the three possible answers to the question come up on the screen. Aleck says its answer A and someone says "are you sure"? "Yes, 100%". Even if we say "no I'm sure it is answer C". Aleck insists and we somehow think that well if he is 100% surely, he is right. Then the answer is disclosed and it is answer C. We look at him every time he does it again, we have got to know that basically he just hasn't got a clue, well he has the clue, but not the correct answer. We just bah ha him when he tries to convince us now. He'll have to do better before we can trust his answers are right.

The disciples apart from Thomas initially had been present when our Lord appeared to them but Thomas needed further convincing that they had actually seen him. After all he was dead, they didn't have a clue what they were talking about surely. But a week later he had to eat humble pie. There in front of him was his Lord. The scars of his crucifixion still there for all of the disciples including Thomas to see. Jesus also opened up the opportunity to Thomas to put his "finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side". I don't think that Thomas did put his hand into Jesus' side, but he may have been tempted to do so just to be doubly be sure that Jesus was really there. But we are then told by Jesus speaking to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed". John following Jesus' instructions has shared this story with us, this miracle with

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us in his gospel. He wrote them for us so that we too will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

We are given choices in our lives, some of the choices we make bring hurt to maybe one, two, three, four people, some choices we make bring hurt to a much larger number of people. Each time we take time to read and try to hear what the writers of the gospels are saying to us we need to place those words into our minds and let the words speak to us today.

We are given the choice to take what Jesus has given to us the gift of forgiveness for the hurt and pain that we have caused others sometimes our loved ones and those close to us but sometimes strangers from afar. There is another passage of scripture that comes to mind, 1 Corinthians 13: 11-13 from the Contemporary English Version of the Bible:

*11 When we were children,
we thought and reasoned
as children do.
But when we grew up,
we quit our childish ways.
12 Now all we can see of God
is like a cloudy picture
in a mirror.
Later we will see him
face to face.
We don't know everything,
but then we will,
just as God completely
understands us.
13 For now there are faith,
hope, and love.
But of these three,
the greatest is love.*

We cannot live in our childhoods forever and a day there comes a day when, yes, we accept people for who they are. But they like us are only human and do make mistakes. There are some people who will never face the fact that they have hurt someone or more than an individual, they may even have a belief in Christ. When we were children, we needed to develop our survival strategies, we cannot be wrapped up in cotton wool for ever. It is through our life experiences that we can gain the strength to face situations that sometimes shake our belief in Christ as well as our fellow human beings. We have and we will come through even the most challenging times in our lives including what we face today and days to come. We need to have faith; we need to have trust and when we meet with Jesus face to face one day, we will see God's love embracing each of us as we try to forgive and where we need to ask for forgiveness. God's love conquers

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all. In fact, it endures forever and helps us to grow into the people that God wants us to be. He believes in us, do we believe in Him?

Lord Jesus let us believe that you,
more than ever before, are in the world today.
We need to have someone to look up to,
to stand beyond us, to walk behind us,
to walk side by side as we begin to stumble
and struggle with our lives today.

We want to reach out and touch you so
that we too can reach out and
touch those who need us most.
When we cannot be with our loved ones
we try to trust that you are there with them
but it is hard Lord, it is very hard.

We come to you Lord Jesus and ask that
you give us new life.
New life that comes only from your Holy Spirit.
Give us the strength to continue to do
your work as your disciples did,
even with their faults.

As we, your people, make our own way in life we
trust that whatever we may face, even when we are
apart, we are joined by your spirit.
We thank you Lord our heavenly Father
and Christ our earthly servant and saviour.

Amen