

St. Columba's Episcopal Church  
April 12, 2026 – 2 Easter  
John 20:19-31  
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

Every year on the Sunday following Easter Sunday the Gospel lesson is the one we just heard, the encounter between the risen Lord and “Doubting Thomas.” Thomas had not been with the other disciples on Easter evening. When the disciples who had seen Jesus then told Thomas about their experience, he was not convinced. His friends had told him a rather unbelievable story, hadn't they? Why would he take their word that the man he had seen crucified was now alive? I think I would have wanted to see Jesus for myself. Would you?

What do we think of Thomas? His reputation is certainly tarnished. When we call someone a “doubting Thomas,” we mean something negative, that the person is overly skeptical. I think we unfairly judge Thomas. What is more significant than Thomas' doubt is his faith. For as soon as Jesus offered Thomas the proof he needed, Thomas responded immediately, “My Lord and my God!” This is much more than an acknowledgment that Jesus is in fact alive after death. This is Thomas' assertion that the risen Christ is his Lord and that he is God. There is no longer any doubt about who Jesus was and is. Like Thomas', our faith is in the living and eternal Christ.

Jesus said to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” That includes nearly everyone who has believed in Christ since the time of his resurrection appearances, including us. Though we have been given the blessing of faith, we may have doubts as well as faith. That is true of most Christians. I think the story of Thomas assures us that Jesus understands our doubts and that he will somehow and at some time make himself known to us so that we can believe in him wholeheartedly, with no more doubts, with only joy in knowing him.

Perhaps the story of “Doubting Thomas” appeals to us because so many of us – perhaps all of us – have experienced doubt about the truth of the faith we profess. Last Sunday I described the message of Easter in this way: Life is stronger than death. Goodness is stronger than evil. Light overcomes darkness, not the other way around. Self-giving, God-centered love is stronger than hatred and selfishness and indifference. Caring for others with compassion has more power than using and exploiting others. Truth will triumph over lies.

I am convinced that as followers of the risen Lord, we are called to trust these messages from God and to live in witness to their truth. But is it possible not to doubt when we constantly hear news of the world that seems to give the lie to these assertions of faith? Is it possible not to doubt when our own lives and the lives of the people we love are marred by difficulties and suffering?

Thomas doubted what the other disciples told him about the risen Lord. He wanted proof. All of this is true. But remember that he was there that evening when Jesus appeared to them the second time. He hadn't abandoned the others who had also been disciples, who had followed and loved Jesus, even though it was dangerous to be identified as followers of Jesus at the time, dangerous to be in the company of the others. He hadn't been there the week before – we don't know why – but he was there then. Like Thomas, we can be faithful. We have followed and loved Jesus, and we can continue even when we don't understand why the world is as it is, why human beings face so many challenges.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if Christ appeared to us, to show us beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is alive, our Lord and Savior, that it's all real and all true? Some Christians are given such visions and experiences, but most of us are among those Jesus describes as "those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." We may not have had visions, but along the journey of faith we have had moments of assurance, either in times of doubt or at other times. These are moments to treasure, to ponder in our hearts.

It is one of the privileges of my priestly ministry to be with people at important times of their lives. Birth, baptism, marriage, and other joyous occasions. Also, at times of fear and loss, sorrow and grief, in the hospital when someone is injured or ill, and in the hours and days surrounding a person's death.

I will never forget being with one very elderly woman while she was in the hospital and drawing close to death. I had prayed with her, anointed her with the oil of healing, and sat near her at the bedside, just the two of us. By this time she was unable to speak, but it was clear that she understood what I said and did. After a period of prayerful silence, she looked with full attention toward the foot of her bed. She saw someone or something I could not see. What I did see was a look of radiant joy on her face, a look I hope I never forget. That night she went home to God. Something far beyond the ordinary was going on!

When we are blessed with assurances like these, when something beyond the ordinary breaks in on our day to day lives, we must treasure these moments in our memories and in our hearts. These times of assurance are like a well of faith, ready for us to draw upon when our faith is dry or our doubts trouble us. What better season than Easter season to turn our attention to all the ways God has stood among us as the risen Christ stood among his disciples, showing us what we needed to see, telling us what we needed to hear, blessing us in countless ways, assuring us that all will be well.

Whenever and however Jesus reveals himself to us – in the Eucharist, in prayer, in scripture, in one another, in the sick and helpless and needy people in the world, in those we love, in the blessed assurance of God's love given to us by the Holy Spirit – we must bend the knees of our hearts, as Thomas did, and say "My Lord and my God!"

The first disciples spread the good news about the risen Christ by preaching, by the example of their lives, and through letters. This morning we heard a portion of The First Letter of Peter (1:3-9), words that might be addressed to us: "Although you have not seen Jesus Christ, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." This Easter season, may we rejoice and thank God for the blessing of our faith in Christ, and may we be sustained now by the hope of meeting our Lord face to face, friend to friend. Alleluia and amen.

