

## **John 20:19-31**

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, '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.'

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written 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 .

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The first Easter Sunday in John's gospel starts with a stunning revelation at dawn, and ends with Thomas declaring his skepticism; a very long day. There is no suggestion of how the rest of the day was spent - the rumours that traveled from house to house; the hope (or doubt) that was kindled in each disciple in the time between Peter's discovery of the empty tomb and Jesus appearance behind locked doors. And somehow, Thomas missed it all.

He missed the rumours of the day; the speculation about the story told by the women, and critically he missed Jesus evening audience with his terrified friends. To put Thomas' questions to rest, it takes another Sunday.

The Christian Church hangs all hope - and focusses all its rituals - on the glory of that first Easter Day. In time the church would turn the 'first day of the week' into a day of celebration and worship. The calendar now pivots on 'the weekend', and our Sunday worship services launch us into a fresh work week - or so it is now. In Thomas' time, it was just another Sunday.

With our habits strangely altered, one day seems very much like another right now. Losing track of where we are in the week (or the month) has become a national pastime. Even for me, today seems like any other day - except that it's another Sunday - another chance (when things are 'normal') to gather in worship; to sing, preach and pray; to be reminded that the first day of the week is now the last day of our fear.

Under the circumstances, beset by news of more infections and more deaths and the stirring of civil unrest among those who seem to care only for their 'rights', it seems to me that a month of Sundays might not be enough to clear the air and set things right. But we have today, and just as it was for Thomas, I pray that today will be enough. Enough to convince us that the tomb is empty. Enough to persuade us that Jesus is risen. Enough to offer us the hope we need - the joy we need - the strength we need.

For many, today is just another Sunday. For us, it's Easter all over again.

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Let us pray:

O God, bring peace and the days run together - as this time and these circumstances threaten to make fools of us; robbing us of reason. Bring peace with the sudden, delightful revelation of your presence where we least expect it. So may every day seem like Easter Day - and our every moment be filled with wondrous rejoicing.

Amen

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Be assured of the Peace that God has promised, which is yours now and always through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen