



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 7 APRIL 2024- EASTER 2**

COLLECT

Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father. Amen.

Psalm 133

- 1 Behold how good and pleasant it is ♦
to dwell together in unity.
- 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, ♦
running down upon the beard,
- 3 Even on Aaron's beard, ♦
running down upon the collar of his clothing.
- 4 It is like the dew of Hermon ♦
running down upon the hills of Zion.
- 5 For there the Lord has promised his blessing: ♦
even life for evermore.

Acts 4.32-35

The Believers Share Their Possessions

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from John, chapter 20, verses 19-31.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

I am the light of the world, says the Lord. Whoever follows me has the light of life.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 20, verses 19-31.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

John 20.19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

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.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 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.'

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.' 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.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' 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.'

The Purpose of This Book

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 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.

A Reflection from Hannah...

For Thomas, that first Easter week must have been really difficult. He must have felt so excluded as the story was recounted over and over. Seven days pass before Jesus appears in the Upper Room again. We know from elsewhere in scripture that Thomas was certainly the kind of man who wanted clarification. Who wasn't going to pretend to understand, who wasn't going to settle until he could say those words 'my Lord and my God' wholeheartedly, authentically.

Which brings us to the Easter story.

For Thomas, it simply did not compute. Dead people are dead. He would have seen crucifixions before. He knew the full horror of the ordeal, and what a crucified body looked like- crumpled, limp, pierced, nailed through, weakened by torture- a disfiguring death that took a massive toll on the flesh. Of course it didn't add up- in Thomas' declaration that unless he sees the wounded risen body he's not going to believe he names a question we're all desperate to have addressed.

And it is. Having missed THE moment in history, Thomas is delighted, stunned, to find that Jesus has an encounter especially prepared for him; a moment for him to own and hold. It's also a moment for Thomas in the uniqueness of his own identity and concerns- Christ knew the question Thomas wanted an answer to, met him in the heart of his own 'deal breaker' and addressed it- he showed him the wounds in his hands and side. And the result- those words 'my Lord and my God'- a confession of Christ - shows us that this answered everything.

Christ is ready to meet us in our questions and with our 'deal breaker' issues. There's a strong sense that John wants us to know this. The story is crafted so that after Thomas speaks, Jesus almost turns out from that encounter and addresses the reader with a beatitude- 'blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.' That's us.

In the end, Thomas didn't miss anything- he was gifted his own encounter- it's actually not possible to miss anything with Jesus- as Thomas shows us, as countless Christians testify- the moment is there, waiting- uniquely suited to the person who approaches God with a question, or has heard amazing things that don't yet make sense, and longs to find an answer. Christ meets his beloved, and gifts us our own opportunity to confess him as Lord.