

2026. 0412. 1 Peter 1:3–9. John 20:19–31

On the evening of the first day of the week—the same day Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene—he also appeared to a frightened group of followers in an upper room and breathed the Holy Spirit on them. Thomas was not there, so Jesus appeared to him the following week. Thomas said he would only believe if he could touch Jesus, and he touched Jesus’ scars.

Then Thomas responded with a profound confession woven through the story: “My Lord and my God.” The one who had demanded proof now offered recognition. His doubt became a path into the very heart of faith through a fuller encounter. He came to believe through the tension between longing and fulfillment.

This is the story from the gospel of John.

When Jesus was crucified, his disciples were deeply discouraged and fell into despair. We see throughout the Gospels that many accounts highlight the disciples’ unbelief and stubbornness, doubt, ridicule, disappointment and resignation, and anxiety and astonishment. As a result, when Jesus was crucified, the disciples scattered, and his ministry seemed to end.

Yet the opposite happened. The risen Jesus appeared to his disciples, spoke with them, and even shared a meal with them.

In today’s passage, we read, however, “They still did not understand the Scripture that said Jesus must rise from the dead.” They had just seen the empty tomb, yet they could not grasp that Jesus had truly been raised. Instead, they returned to where they had been before.

What kind of life were they returning to?

John 20:19 says, “On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.” The place to which the disciples returned was marked by fear and failure; they had not yet understood what Jesus’ resurrection meant. It was still a place rooted in the past, where they remained trapped within the limits of their own knowledge and experience.

The disciples did not yet hold the reality of Jesus’ resurrection at the empty tomb, because they were still imprisoned in their own knowledge, experiences, and past. They clung too strongly to their own expectations and to their particular understanding of Jesus’ words.

The words Jesus had spoken and the life he had lived were not yet truly central to them. Still bound by the successes and failures, the standards and values of the familiar way, they did not even think to look back on the words and the way of life Jesus had given them during his earthly ministry.

The disciples had to look into the empty tomb and find something other than despair; Thomas had to see more than Jesus’ scars. His struggling and anguish led him to thrust his hand into the side of the living God.

Thomas seemed to ask for proof of Jesus’ resurrection in order to believe, but he may have been asking for something more.

What led him to call Jesus both God and Lord was not his power, but his wounds and scars. It was not the resurrection alone that convinced Thomas of Jesus’ Lordship, but the confirmation of what Jesus truly meant by offering his body on the cross.

For Thomas, the scars represented Christ’s commitment to challenge the power of empire, to suffer alongside the powerless, and to stand in solidarity with them. It

took great courage for Thomas to reach into Jesus' wounds and move beyond his pain to accept that the resurrection could be real.

This encounter with the resurrected Jesus transformed the disciples—including Thomas—who had fled from Jerusalem to Galilee in disappointment and fear, into apostles willing to risk their lives by returning to Jerusalem to proclaim Christ's resurrection. It is the conversion of skeptics and opponents.

Both the hands and the side of Jesus bore the healed marks of suffering. This revelation is not only proof; it is also a promise. They are not open wounds but scars that testify to his strength and power.

The risen Jesus appeared as a presence of peace. His visible wounds show that the resurrection does not erase the cross; instead, it reinterprets and transforms it, so that Jesus' ministry continues in a new and deeper way.

Today we are looking at the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus. What does the empty grave before us point to?

The resurrection came into places of loss, confusion, tears, and still darkness. This is the truth we must hold on to first today: resurrection did not skip over loss.

Resurrection did not ignore tears. The risen Christ comes right into the midst of our loss and our tears.

As I mentioned last Sunday, the resurrection is not the church's final destination.

The resurrection, along with Jesus' pain, suffering and scars, is an arrow pointing in a single direction. Jesus is the Son of God, and the life of Jesus is the true life we are called to follow today.

Let us consider who we are today as resurrected disciples and where we are living out that identity.

How can we, as the church, fully embrace the power of the Resurrection and the ongoing work of the risen Christ and his Spirit in us, so that we may continue his transforming work for those still bound by fear and uncertainty in a world longing for new life, hope, love, and peace?

We are commissioned to move beyond comfort, complacency, and self-imposed limits into the redemptive and restorative ministry of resurrected Jesus Christ in the world. Because the resurrection does not remain just an event of Jesus. The resurrection is the event that enables us to live anew today. The life that breaks through loss comes to us again today, and today the Lord, who calls our names with tears, lifts us up in hope.

If Easter is celebrated and remembered only as a “ceremonial feast” rather than a “feast of compassion and solidarity,” our celebration will betray the spirit and life of Jesus in the name of Jesus. Jesus revealed his life as one of “being with people” who are excluded by the church and the wider community—people with disabilities, refugees, queer people, the homeless, and even Muslims—by looking upon them with compassion. The cross on which Jesus hung never served as a “guarantee of victory,” but instead revealed the very path of compassion and solidarity. Even if we may fail and even die in this work of compassion and solidarity, we remain faithful to the way of Jesus.

Like Thomas, we reach into the wounds of the world and the suffering of others—those whom Jesus longed to be with—and there we come to recognize the reality of his resurrection.

As we continue to reflect on Easter, just as Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds and place his hand in his side, Jesus now invites us into solidarity with one another, calling us to put our very bodies on the line for those at the margins.

The hope that can only be realized when God's people bear one another's crosses in everyday life and stand in solidarity to bring life out of death and hope out of despair.

Let us pray,

O God, help us to understand and experience the resurrection of Jesus as you welcome each of us into a true community, where all are accepted and find a home.

May we rejoice in this great gift. Amen.