

Sermon: LIVING & SCARED

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

Question for you: What have you heard this week?.....

Examples: ..in the lunchroom, at the YMCA, on the news,

or in an exchange with some friends? What have you SEEN or heard on social media?

Now a more vital question: How much of what you heard is true?

Was it believable or was it fake news or misinformation?

We have before us a Resurrection text, reported to us by the evangelist John. John tells us what the disciples experienced on the evening of that very first Easter day. It's perhaps hard for us to put ourselves in the disciples shoes way back then. I bet they must have been in shock and filled with grief having just witnessed Jesus' horrible crucifixion. On Easter morning Mary Magd. was the 1st. to see Jesus after he was raised. Then when she told the disc., "I have seen the Lord," **THE NEWS THAT JESUS' REURRECTION WAS REAL, they really didn't believe her, an idle tale they called it.** Ten of them were now huddled in a room behind locked doors and filled with fear, fear I would imagine that the same thing could happen to them, fear that the One whom they'd followed for 3 years was now dead and gone. **NOW WHAT?** One commentator notes: "for the gathered

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disciples on that first Easter evening, “Without explanation (about how it happens), Jesus is among them speaking directly to their fear; ‘Peace be with you.’ **not once** but twice Jesus gives the greeting.” THE RISEN CHRIST shows up when they least expected it! He shows up to bring His Peace in the midst of their chaos and fear. He had told them previously, at least 3 times, about his crucifixion and his rising from the dead. They had heard it, but did it sink in, did they believe it? Now He stands there showing them the scars in his hands and side. NOW THEY GET IT! They’re excited and rejoicing to see the Risen Lord!

Thomas, for whatever reason, was not with them on that 1st Easter evening. So the disciples tell Thomas what Mary Magdalene had PREVIOUSLY told them, “WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD!” We can almost see Thomas shaking his head when he hears this & essentially says, “UNLESS I get to do what you did, unless I see and touch those scars, I’m not going to take your word for it.”

7 days later, Yet again without explanation about how it happens, the Risen Jesus shows up through closed doors to be with the 10 disciples & Thomas. He again shares his greeting, “Peace be with you.” Our Risen Lord **already knew** what

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Thomas needed, He knew of Thomas' "I need to see it for myself, I need to touch those scars myself before I can trust the Lord is indeed risen." Seeing is believing right? **Far too often, even in my own previous preaching, the focus has been on Thomas' doubt.**

Joy Moore, in Working Preacher, writes, "The wonder of this moment is the Risen Lord's willingness to meet Thomas **exactly** where Thomas names he needs meeting." There is "no condemnation for Thomas's request, no scolding his doubt, longing for proof ---rather a simple invitation."

'Reach out your hand, put it here. Do not doubt but believe.' OK that's where we get the "doubting Thomas" from. BUT, AND THIS IS IMPORTANT, a more accurate translation of "believe" in John's Gospel would use the word TRUST, so that the Risen Lord's words to Thomas would be: "Do not be **distrusting but trusting**" and "**Are you trusting because you have seen me?** Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to trust." **That would be us.....In the creed today**, when we say, "We believe in God..."

think about using the word TRUST instead===A WHOLE NEW TWIST TO THE CREED.

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I, for one, am so thankful for Thomas! I appreciate his honesty, his willingness to be vulnerable, to question and to do so publically. I'm thankful for his witness, his declaration of faith, "My Lord and my God." I'm grateful to Thomas because he validates my questioning, my struggles in the faith journey, my doubts and my wondering. And I'm indebted to the Risen Christ because there's no shaming of Thomas, just an invitation to see and touch his scars!

I love what Debbie Thomas says about Thomas in this text: "I see (someone) who desired a holy and beautiful thing—a living encounter with Jesus. A man who wouldn't settle for someone else's experience of resurrection, but stuck around in the hope of having his own. A man who dared to confess uncertainty in the midst of those who were certain. A man who recognized his Lord in scars, not wonders."

We don't have what Thomas had, a literal living presence of the Risen Christ. What we do have is the testimony of God's Word, the witness of the church, the work of the H.Spirit, and the evidence of those around us. Our challenge is much like what the disciples faced. How do we see the Risen Christ standing among us?

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In our day, where do we see, hear, & experience the living and scared Jesus of Easter, inviting us to touch those places of pain, touch those scars, touch them with His compassion? I'm here to say with you, "I trust The Risen Lord shows up in broken bread and a bit of wine. He is here." When I look into the faces of refugees, I see the Risen Jesus, Living and scared. When we accompany the grieving, the Resurrected Christ is present, Living and scared. When the hungry in Ukraine & the Gaza Strip are fed again, the Jesus of Easter is there, Living and Scared. When we support Houses to Homes in Guatemala the Risen Lord shows up, living and scared. When we unlock the doors of division amongst us, engage in reconciliation, ***then it is*** that the Living and Scared Risen Christ comes to say, "Peace Be With you!"

You and I both know what we hear every day. HOW OFTEN HAVE WE ASKED, "HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE HEAR IS TRUE?"

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In spite of all the misinformation, In the midst of our daily context,
I say with you, "I believe, I trust in the resurrection of the
body.....?"

In the midst of our questioning, our fears, our skepticisms & our
doubts, We're here to say with Thomas, "My Lord and My God!"?

THANKS BE TO GOD FOR TRUSTING, BELIEVING THOMAS!

NOW: May THE Peace Of Our Risen Lord be with you!

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia! AMEN!

AMEN!