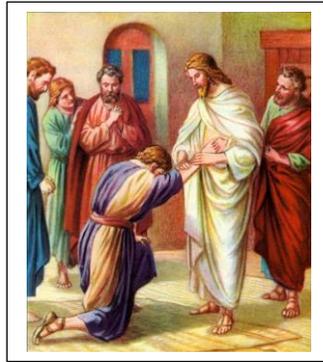


Coop's Scoops: Sunday Sermon and Liturgy, April 11, 2021



Sentence: “Have you believed, Thomas, because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

Readings: Acts 4: 32-35 Psalm 133 1John 1:1 – 2:2

Collect: Almighty and eternal God, the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt, may we, who have not seen, have faith and receive the fullness of Christ’s blessing, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: John 20: 24-31 Jesus and Thomas

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin^[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ 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.” ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ 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. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,^[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The Sermon:

We begin this morning by remembering last Sunday's reading. The wonderful evening when Jesus appeared first in His resurrection Body to His disciples gathered in fear in the Upper Room. They were, at that time, caught "in-between" ...they knew what had been; they knew what was, but they did not yet know what was to come. Jesus had lived and ministered and suffered and died. They had been with Him and ministering beside Him. That is "what was". In the morning, Mary had run to them and told them that she had seen the Lord. He was alive. The Scriptures said they believed. So that is what "is". They did a wonderful thing when they heard that...they gathered all together in a familiar room which they recently occupied with Jesus...they talked....they prayed..... No one was alone, except, apparently Peter. For he was not with them. Have you ever wondered why? Perhaps it was shame....He had denied the Lord and wept bitterly and the rumour mill in Jerusalem was just as good as the one in Muskoka, so Peter figured his brothers all knew about it too. Maybe best to lie low for awhile, even though he had met with John that morning. Even though he himself had seen the empty tomb. Whatever the reason (and it could be as simple as he was running late or had to pick up some things at the grocery store), Peter was not with them.

Jesus, we know, comes and blesses them, and pours the Spirit upon them and commissions them to go and complete His mission.

Peter does turn up, and that's to his credit. And they tell him. And he does not believe what they are saying. If I had been there right then, I'd be holding Peter's hand, and thinking they had been overcome with grief and were hallucinating. There is nothing wrong with putting faith on pause. Peter didn't abandon faith, he stayed with the others another whole week. Wonder how that went?

Well, we hear nothing about the disciples being unkind to him, or scorning him for not believing them. We rather hear that they all, Peter included, continued in prayers and in the study of the Hebrew Scriptures. Peter was NOT cast out for not

believing. He was enfolded. There is a great lesson there for the Church in our time.

Onward! On the eighth day, the disciples including Peter were gathered, with the doors still locked. Believing or doubting, fear remained. And Jesus “appeared” before them. And Jesus quoted what Thomas had said the week before ‘Unless I see in His hands....unless I place my finger.... Jesus said “Here, look, touch, and believe”. Jesus did not think Peter’s request or need was “wrong”. But Peter figured it out pretty quick...he never did do those things...he fell right on his knees and say “My Lord and my God”. That is the first time that Jesus was directly called “GOD” and Jesus did not quibble... Jesus accepted the word “God” for Himself, and there is another great lesson for the Church in that today.

So we have arrived at the a new place of what “is”, and the disciples are instructed to wait until Pentecost to find out what is to come, what their role will be continuing the mission of Jesus through their lives and in their places. There is often a gap for preparation between what “is” and what is “to come.” There are some meditative correlations possible regarding the what was and what is and what is to come in the Pandemic as well, but not for this morning. The Spirit will guide you!

I am so thankful that John recorded the story of Thomas in this way....it’s not the sort of story about “us” that we might want anyone to read in our lifetimes, let alone 2000 years after our passing. And John takes pains to tell us why he wrote. “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have line in His name”. Thomas would have agreed that such an outcome was worth it all.

Thomas, the Patron Saint of our Bracebridge parish, is so often remembered just as doubting Thomas. Let’s be proud of him today, proud that he believed so much and so deeply that he became the first to proclaim Jesus as both Lord and God. Proud that doubt and honest searching and reason are all “tools” that can help us on our way to faith. “Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good” may perhaps have been a good life motto for Thomas. It’s from 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

There is joy in gathering together. There is grace. There is room for faith and for doubt. There is room for “just checking”. We will not have all the answers, but

together we will always do better at finding some of the answers. Thus, in gathering, there is wisdom. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayer: A poetic offering from Thomas Troeger, Borrowed Light, used by permission.

“These things did Thomas count as real:
The warmth of blood, the chill of steel,
The grain of wood, the heft of stone,
The last frail twitch of flesh and bone.



The vision of his skeptic mind
Was keen enough to make him blind
To any unexpected act
Too large for his small world of fact.

His reasoned certainties denied
That one could live when one had died,
Until his fingers read like Braille
The marking of the spear and nail.

May we, O God, by grace believe
And thus the risen Christ receive,
Whose raw, imprinted palms reached out
And beckoned Thomas from his doubt.”

*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
And His righteousness
And all these things shall be
added unto you...alleluia!*
**Man shall not live by bread alone
But by every Word
That proceeds from the mouth
of God....alleluia!**
*Ask and shall be given unto you
Seek and you shall find
Knock and the door will be
opened unto you...alleluia!*

Blessing!

May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.