

Easter 2 (Quasimodogeniti) – Vicar Anderson sermon  
St. John 20:19-31 “Seeing is Not Believing.”  
April 15/16, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

+ + +

O risen Christ, who said, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”:  
Mercifully grant that this benediction may be ours; so that, walking by faith and not by sight,  
we may evermore rejoice in You, and confess You as our Savior, our Lord, and our God. Amen.  
(Parish Prayers, ed. Frank Colquhoun, p. 86)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

---

*The sermon text for today is taken from the 20th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:*

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, 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; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

---

*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, who walks with you by faith, who you don’t see visibly, but He is right here with you, dear fellow redeemed:

Whose shoes do you want to be in? The city of Jerusalem on the first day of the week is quite busy. Soldiers are minding their own business, probably wondering why they are guarding someone's grave. Women are wondering who is going to move the large stone away. To their surprise angels move away the stone and proclaim the wonderful news, Christ is risen! The fear of the religious leaders has become a reality, the tomb is empty. The women not only hear this glorious news, but then they see Jesus! They tell the disciples, the ones who loved Jesus so much, and they doubted what the women told them. Thomas is nowhere to be found. So again, whose shoes do you want to be in? I think we can all feel for those disciples. We know some of the thoughts that they probably had. Their teacher was gone! He was dead! We weren’t there, we did not witness what took place, but Scripture has revealed to us what happened that Easter day. Our Savior has risen! Christ tells us directly that seeing is not believing.

Jesus’ disciples needed to see Him. Our text shows that on the evening of Easter, they are locked in a room. This is a place that they feel safe. After seeing what happened, they knew that the authorities were probably coming for them next. Remember these are disciples who said “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death” (Luke 22:33). Some news arrives that the tomb is empty. Yet they still do not believe what they have heard.

We see in the Passion account that the disciples needed help to get to this point. They had forgotten Jesus’ teachings. Jesus had spoken plainly to them about how everything was going to be fulfilled. “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And

*when he is killed, after three days he will rise" (Mark 9:31).* Their little faith now has them locked in a room in fear of the leaders who put Jesus to death.

The other gospels have more details about that day. After the women had reported to the disciples what they discovered, Peter and John also raced to the tomb. They saw His folded up burial clothes. Jesus body was raised, yet they did not understand what was happening. They were stuck in despair. Thomas was not even in the room on that first day of the week. He did not get to rejoice in seeing His Lord. He wanted hard proof that Jesus was alive otherwise he would not believe it.

Scripture speaks very plainly to us just like Jesus spoke to His disciples. We will often ignore what Jesus says to stay in our sins. We try to appease the world, and the world will still throw us into despair. We can get to the point that our lack of faith can have us locked behind closed doors in fear too. This is what the devil wants. He wants us at that point of no return where we doubt God and we despair that we have been left alone. He points out all of the things that are going wrong in our lives. We hear the lie "If your God is a good God, why is He letting all of these bad things happen to you, surely you won't have more than what you can bear?"

Like the disciples, we often doubt what God says. God tells us that He keeps His promises. The moment something happens in our lives that causes our world to turn upside down, we immediately doubt what God tells us. We try to find our own way of fixing the situation. The first thing we should be doing is praying to God. Our way of communicating with Him. And we should go to His Word where He shows us and tells us that He works things out for the good. We tend to not look much farther than the disaster in front of us because that doesn't look like God's promises.

God's promise is that He will abide with us, provide for us, and help us. When we forget His first commandment to fear, love, and trust in Him above all things, we ignore His promises. When we forget about fear, love, and trust, well now why should we believe in Him? The world tells us to look around and see that there is no God. We must take care of ourselves. Unfortunately, we will continue into the pit of despair because we throw away our only source of comfort in this life.

The disciples looked like they were going to continue to stay in that pit of despair. Maybe they would have come around at some point from hearing what the women had told them. Jesus however has a different plan. Finally, as the day ends, they get to see Him with their own eyes. *"Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."* Their Lord was there and was alive! Their faith was restored! They get to see in person that their Savior has risen from the dead! They see that He is no longer in the tomb. Death was destroyed. Jesus has done all that He says He would do!

Now remember Thomas was not there that first night. The grief of the events must have been overwhelming. Thomas also said he needs that physical proof. One week later and the first thing that Jesus does after saying *"Peace be with you,"* is that He heads right over to Thomas. This is not only Jesus walking over to Thomas, but this is Jesus walking over to speak directly to you.

Where you lack trust, that is all Jesus had. He trusted in God that this was the plan of Salvation. Like Isaac trusting his father when Abraham was about to sacrifice him, Jesus also put His trust in God the Father. He did it perfectly and instead of being spared, He took on all your sins and died for every one of them. Without Jesus death on the cross and resurrection, the world would be right, and you would have nothing or no one to trust in. There would be no reason to believe in God keeping His promises. There would be no reason to go to church to hear and learn from Him. You would just sit at home and wait for your untimely demise. These sins of doubt and failing to trust in God, they are forgiven. When the hard events of life get you, your faith might waver, but what you see in that room where Jesus met His disciples is the truth. Your faith in Jesus Christ is not in vain. He is risen indeed! And as He speaks to Thomas, He has a message for you.

That message comes to you right here and now. You are in the year 2023 and you did not get to witness the crucifixion. The men and women who were there saw and heard what happened, yet they doubted. You were not there, but you believe it. You have a new life in Christ because He is speaking directly to you. *Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* You have faith because even though it has been 2,000 years since Jesus was visibly on this earth, He still comes directly to you in the Means of Grace providing you with strength every day. Jesus is still here! This is why you come to church, to hear His Word and to receive His Sacraments. This is where Jesus is present, coming to you. He has marked you as His own, He speaks His Words of comfort that you are blessed, and He personally provides you with forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation at the altar. He breathes the Holy Spirit on you so that you hear this message and believe it.

We walk by a clear and confident faith because God has kept His promises. Our Savior has risen from the dead. Jesus then tells us directly that we do not have to worry or doubt. We were not present, but we are blessed because we believe. This is why Scripture is recorded. Everyone can hear the message of their salvation. Jesus came and died for all. St. John tells us that it is recorded for our hearing so that we may believe. We receive comfort that Christ has not left us. He is with us now in this life and He will reign over us forever. It is 2023 and we know that the tomb of Jesus was empty. Like Job we can confess, *I know that my Redeemer lives; what comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, He lives, who once was dead; He lives, my ever-living head (ELH 351).* Amen.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

+ + +