

SERMON : JOHN 20:19-31 (EASTER 2, 2020)

MAY the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. <Amen>

It's been one week since Easter, one week since the chaos and excitement, one week since the empty tomb, one week since our first "Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia." It's one week after the resurrection and the disciples are in the same place they were Easter night. They are in the same room behind the same locked doors.

So if the resurrection is such a big deal, such a life changing event, why are they still stuck in the same place? What difference has the empty tomb made? How has it changed them? Has it let them see themselves and their world differently? Has it done anything for them? It doesn't look as if it's made much difference. They are in the same house behind the same locked doors as a week ago. What's changed?

I wonder, one week after Easter, what has Christ's resurrection done for us? Are our lives different? Do we see and engage the world in new ways? What difference has the empty tomb made in our lives over the last week? When I look at my life it looks a whole like it did last Sunday, the week before, and the week before that. And when I look at the world, from my "bubble" it looks pretty much the same as before.

I used to hear today's gospel and be critical of the disciples. How can they be stuck in the same place, I used to ask. Surely, they REALLY should have done better than that!!

After all death has been defeated. "Christ is risen. Alleluia."

Why aren't their lives different? <PAUSE>

Then I realised, I should really be asking about my own life. Why isn't my life different after Easter? Am I stuck with the same outlook? I should be doing better than that. How can I live the resurrection better, more powerfully, more fully, more authentically? After all, "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia."

Here's what I think today's gospel is telling us:

- Christ's resurrection IS a big deal;
- The empty tomb IS a life changing event;
- The resurrection DOES make a difference in our lives; and <pause>
- It also takes time.

Yes, **Resurrection takes time**. It is not a one time event. It's something that we grow into. It's a process. It's a way of being and a life to be lived. By the grace of God we evolve into resurrected people through our relationships and the circumstances of our lives. God wastes nothing. Every day we are stepping into the resurrected life. It's not always easy and some days are just plain hard.

I wonder if we sometimes come to Easter Sunday and the empty tomb expecting to wake up on Monday to a whole new life and world. I am guessing that you awoke on Easter Monday to the same life and world you had on Good Friday. I did. It's not because the resurrection failed or because Jesus didn't do "the Jesus thing" in our lives. It's because the "Jesus thing" **takes time**.

Let me try to explain what I mean by talking about St. Thomas.

What facts come to mind when you hear his name? <PAUSE> He was a doubter. "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." That Thomas doubted may be the only fact that comes to mind for many people. It is so prevalent that we still use the term "A Doubting Thomas".

HOWEVER, that "doubt" is just the starting point for Thomas' resurrection life. It is not the whole story.

Do YOU know the end of Thomas' story? Do you know where he died? He died in India. He was the apostle to the people of India. He brought the gospel of Christ to India. He died a martyr after he was run through with five spears by five soldiers.

That doesn't sound much like a doubter, does it?

It sounds like someone who grew and changed, someone for whom the resurrection of Christ was real, someone for whom the empty tomb made a difference. It just took a little time, as it does for most, maybe all of us.

We know Doubting Thomas but let's not forget Confessing Thomas. He's in today's gospel as well. "My Lord and my God!" With those words Thomas has recognised and named a new relationship, a new world view, a new way of being.

Somewhere between Doubting Thomas and Confessing Thomas is the story of resurrection in Thomas' life.

All that stuff about Doubting Thomas, the fact of his disbelief, is just Thomas' starting place, nothing more and nothing less.

It's neither good nor bad. It's a starting place. And we all have our starting places.

It's not where we start our personal resurrection journey that's important ... it's how we walk the path of The Risen Christ ... and where that journey leads us to.

<PAUSE>

So my earlier harshness towards the disciples was sorely misguided. It's not a tragedy that the disciples are in the same house behind the same locked doors. That's just their starting place.

The great tragedy would have been if the disciples refused to unlock the doors, refused to throw open the doors, and refused to get out the house. <PAUSE> BUT they didn't !! Alleluia.

What are the doors that remain locked in our lives?

What are the things that have kept us stuck with the same outlook?

I'll say it again, that's just our starting place.

Don't judge it as good or bad, right or wrong.

It's just where we are and it's the place Christ shows up.

It happened twice in today's gospel. Both times the disciples are in the same house behind the same locked doors and Jesus shows up. He stands in the midst of them. The walls and the locked doors of their house could not keep Jesus out. And the walls and locked doors of your "house" will not keep Him out.

He steps into the midst of our house, through the locked doors, and breathes peace and life into us.

He breathes peace and hope into us.

He breathes peace and courage into us.

He breathes peace and strength into us.

And that breath of peace is the key that unlocks the door. So take a deep breath, take it all in, let it fill and enliven you. Let it give you the hope, courage, and strength to unlock and open the doors of your life, and then GET OUT OF YOUR HOUSE.

Open your doors to the story of your resurrection and get out of your house.

Walk with The Risen Christ from where you are now, your starting point, to where Christ wants you to end up - let Him lead you because

Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed! Alleluia. AMEN.

I runga e te Ingoa o te Atua, te Matua, te Tama me te Wairua Tapu.

In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit <AMEN>