

EASTER 2

YEAR A

ACTS 2:14a, 22-32

1 PETER 1:3-9

JOHN 20:19-31

APRIL 22, 23, 2017

Lots of things happened the day of our Lord's resurrection. The day was surrounded by weeping, searching and revelation. There is also unbelief. Mary wept at the tomb as she was searching for the body of Jesus. She was searching for Jesus as though she were searching for a dead Jesus. The Lord Jesus broke through Mary's sadness and through her tears. Jesus revealed himself in the speaking of her name. "Mary!" The shepherd called Mary by name and she knew his voice. Jesus said that his sheep will recognize his voice when he called to them. He called to her and she knew him. She knew his voice and recognized that this is Jesus because she belonged to him.

Mary went and told Peter and the others but they would not believe. They went to the tomb looking for evidence that Mary had the story right but they did not find physical evidence. They found an empty tomb but would not believe it. Those disciples needed evidence before they would believe it. Mary told them what she had seen and heard. The disciples would not believe her story. It was a woman sharing bits of gossip. They saw her story as being completely unreliable. It is interesting that many have given Thomas the label of Doubting Thomas but the others also doubted until the Lord appeared to them. They were not about to believe the eyewitness of this woman. They would need to see for themselves.

John 20:19, 20 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus does not leave us in the dark about spiritual matters. He did not leave Mary in the garden weeping and he would not leave the disciples in

the upper room in fear and denial. Jesus will not leave us in our places of unbelief. Jesus shows himself to you and me where we are. He comes to us in our fears and in our tears. Jesus comes to us when we are locked up in our sense of denial. He appeared to Mary and to the disciples and he appears to you and me. They saw the Lord and they rejoiced because they could see for themselves that Jesus is alive. They no longer needed to rely on the words of a woman but they could see for themselves. They believed but they had a more difficult challenge in front of them. They would need to convince Thomas who was not there when Jesus appeared.

The Lord appears to Christians and reveals himself in a variety of ways. Jesus is revealed in and through the church. Jesus came to the disciples that were gathered on that Sunday. Jesus would appear to Thomas on the following Sunday. Sunday has been the day of gathering for the church since that time. Jesus is present with us when we worship on Sunday. If you are not in church then you may not see what the Lord is doing. You may not hear what the Lord is teaching. You may not have that personal encounter with the Savior of the world.

JOHN 20:25 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.”

Thomas was not going to say he believed something he did not believe. The others saw Jesus and were bearing witness to the Son of God. They insisted that they had seen Jesus and Thomas should believe them. It is surprising that a fight did not break out or that Thomas did not simply leave. There are many conflicts in the church concerning things less important than seeing the Savior of the Lord. People leave the church over things that, in the grand scheme of things, are not that important. People break away from congregations and start new ones because of disagreements about things that have nothing to do with

the teachings of the Lord. Yet, the disciples did not scold Thomas for not believing. They did what we in the church must do.

What do we do when we are teaching that Jesus is Lord and people do not believe it? What do we do when someone comes along and tells us that our teaching is wrong? We love them and we talk with them. We continue to be God's people in fellowship with them. As people of God we are not abusive to those that do not believe because they have not seen. We do not dismiss them from the church because they will not believe what we are teaching. We do what Jesus does. We continue to love them and we care for them and we allow the Lord to reveal himself to them. We continue searching for the Lord because we have more to learn. We know that God is revealed to us through our conversations with other Christians and even those that are not Christians.

The disciples continued to tell Thomas they had seen the Lord. They did not scold him and they did not dismiss him from the Christian community. They also did not stop telling the Good News. You may not believe what I am preaching and teaching. You may wonder how I can say the things I do in my sermons. You might be skeptical when I tell you that if you walk in faith you will see the glory of the Lord in all you do. The truth is the truth even when people will not believe it. We do not stop proclaiming God's word just because someone does not believe it. We continue to share God's love and God's word even when others are offended by it. We do not water it down and we do not stop proclaiming it.

John 20:26-28 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." 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." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas remained in the Christian community. He was there in that room and Jesus came. Thomas proclaimed the words of one that comes to believe, **“My Lord and my God”** Our Lord reveals himself to us as well. It may not be the same way as for Thomas but our Lord does show up for worship. Our Lord does want you to see and believe but most often it requires us to believe before we can see. We believe the words of truth proclaimed by the word of God. We believe the witness of those that have come to know Jesus and received the miracle of life. The Lord does not want you to doubt. He wants you to come to faith and receive life in his name. Jesus our Lord wants you to believe and receive everything that comes with faith. When you look through the eyes of faith you see the Lord and you proclaim, **“My Lord and my God!”**

The Lord is here today allowing you to experience his love. You have come from the challenges in your life and the Lord is here to walk through those challenges with you. Believe that Jesus lives. Because he lives you also live. Because he lives you have everything you need for this life and eternal life. Jesus is your Lord and your God. Walk in faith and you will see him and you will declare along with Thomas, **“My Lord and my God!”** AMEN