

April 12, 2026 Sermon

Pastor:

He is risen.

Congregation:

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Pastor:

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All right. Before we get any further in this sermon, we have to address Thomas. Doubting Thomas, that's how we always know him, right? Except for doubting Thomas is not in scripture. Thomas, the twin is in scripture. Thomas, the man who says to Jesus when he says he's going to go to Jerusalem, Thomas the man who says, let us go and die with him. Thomas gets a bad rap. He really does. Now, did he doubt? Yes, he did. However, he was no different than the rest of the disciples. Let's face it, what happens when Jesus shows up the first Sunday, the day of the resurrection to the other 10 guys who are in the room locked because of why? Because of fear. Because they don't understand what's going on, because they don't believe yet in the resurrection.

Jesus appears to them and he says, "Peace be with you." And when he had said this, what does he do? He shows them his hands. He shows them his side because they needed to see it as much as Thomas did. Thomas is just the guy that said it out loud. Everybody else had the same problem. Now, Thomas did get a little bit obnoxious when he said, "Unless I touch it, I'm never ever going to believe." Okay, that was a little problematic on Thomas's part. But he got caught up into the emotion and he really wanted to be sure of what he believed. So the next week, eight days ... this is one of the glorious times where the text that we read actually matches the day that we read it. This is literally eight days after the resurrection. So this is literally the time when this all happened.

So we get to read it. In fact, this is what we read every A, B, and C cycle. It's always this text for this Sunday. So he sees ... Now, does Thomas actually have to touch Jesus like he says? A lot of bravado saying, "I need to touch or else I'm not going to believe." But all Jesus did was show him. And Thomas made the most profound confession of faith, "My God and my Lord." We don't hear that from any of the other disciples. We only hear it from Thomas, "My God and my Lord." So Thomas, Thomas, the doubter, like the rest of the doubters that are out there. Okay? No worse, no better. Same as all of us. He struggles sometimes. He's got it right sometimes. He gets it wrong sometimes. He's the imperfect man who spoke before he thought. None of us have any clue how that works, do we?

So we thank God for Thomas because God shows grace to Thomas as he shows grace to all of the disciples. Now he does say, "You believe because you've seen me, but how much greater is it for those who have not seen and yet still believe?" And what a blessing it is for us. Now we have not seen the Christ. It is true. But part of why we believe is because God has inspired these writers to describe what they saw so that we might stand with confidence and know that what they saw was real and it was for not just them, but for all of us. I mean, that's what Peter has to say as he's talking to them. He says, "Blessed be the Father who caused us to be born again to a living hope."

God caused us to be born. Not, we made a decision for God and we chose to be born again, but God caused us to be born. And he caused that in our baptisms. When he brought us into the family and when he does that, he connects us with the joy of our salvation, the confidence that what happened on the cross paid our debt. And Easter is the seal and the confidence that that debt was paid and it was acceptable to God. And we love the fact that he died and he rose and we've been baptized into his death and we surely will be baptized into his life as well.

But when we were baptized, we were born again, yes, but we received an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfaded, which is kept in heaven for us by God himself. God is keeping our salvation safe. He guards and protects us. He keeps us in the one true faith, that we might be confident because the Holy Spirit bears witness to his salvation and is with us in our baptisms. And so we are guarded by God that when we read the word of God, when we see all the things that Christ did, we have confidence that that is for us and that by him doing these things, dying and rising again, that we have life. Not just life here in this world, but life everlasting.

It wouldn't be that great a thing if he said, "Yeah, if you believe in Christ, you will have life." Well, I already got life. What good does that do me? But what it does is, he gives us life everlasting. He gives us hope and salvation. He gives us a purpose to everything that we face in this life. Everything, including the suffering, including the struggles, including the trials. Now, the apostles, when they first heard of Christ and his salvation, what did they do? They hid. They were afraid. They didn't know what to do. Not until the Holy Spirit came and enlivened them and gave them the power to understand what was going on, to put the pieces together so that they might proclaim boldly. Of course, that happens on Pentecost, but after Pentecost, what do they do?

They don't hide anymore. They go into the world, they go into the synagogues. They start in Jerusalem, which is what we're reading about right now in the book of Acts, but it doesn't end there because Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the whole of the world of which we are, of course, the beneficiaries of. And so they proclaim

boldly the fact that Christ died. And how do people respond? Well, in this case, they don't want to listen to what Peter has to say. In fact, they forbid him from preaching in Jesus' name. And what does Peter say? "We must obey God rather than men." Now, this is like the second time that he has been told to shut up and stop talking about Jesus. The first time he said, "I'll let you be the judge. Should we obey God or should we obey men?" This time he doesn't give them a choice. He says, "Look, we're going to obey God, not men."

And Gamaliel, a wise man, recognized by all people as a wise man says, "Let's not do too much here. Let's not kick him out of the synagogue. Let's not make a name for ourselves by oppressing them. Let's just see what happens. Maybe it's from God, maybe it's not. If it's not from God, it's not going to do any harm. So it'll peter out. If it is from God, you might actually be opposing God." Good sound advice.

What do they do with that advice? They take it, sort of. They still beat the apostles and tell them not to preach in Jesus' name, but they don't kick him out of the synagogue. They still allow him to be around and to preach. And how do the disciples react? Do they get all uppity and say, "I cannot believe you were so rude to us. How could you do that?" Instead, what they said was, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus. They rejoiced that they were able to suffer. Now, that doesn't exactly sound like a positive uplifting message on the second Sunday of Easter. Rejoice that you're going to suffer.

But here's the deal. How much is your salvation worth? How much is the forgiveness of sins worth to you? We do a lot of sweating and suffering and whatever else to gain the riches of this world. We sacrifice time, energy, time with family, and sometimes friends. We sacrifice a lot for what we want to get in this world. And we see it as valuable and worth the suffering. How much more are life everlasting? And what a joy that the suffering of this world now has a purpose. I don't want to go and suffer for the sake of Christ, but I'm not afraid to do it either because I know that no matter what happens in my life, God has guarded my salvation and it is in heaven there for me and I am confident of that. And so I don't need to be afraid of what may happen in this world.

I don't need to be afraid that other people might mock me or think that I'm foolish. I don't even need to be afraid if they imprison me or torture me. Now, again, I don't want this to be a downer of a message like, oh man, that's what I have to look forward to. Maybe, maybe not. But regardless of what we face, whatever we face in this world, one, it's temporary. It will not last. Two, we know that God will be with us to strengthen us and nourish us and to give us his words to speak in those times. And three, we also know that it strengthens our faith.

Think about the spiritual mentors in your life, the people that you look up to in the faith, and you listen to their lives and you listen to what they have gone through in

their lives and how they're still rejoicing in the name of the Lord. Why? Because they understand the value of being born again by God. They understand the value of being called a child of God. You know how precious it is? I mean, just think about how precious it is to be a citizen of the United States, a member of the family, a citizen of this country in this town, all the blessings that we have here. It is a wonderful pleasure and privilege. How much more of a privilege is it to be named a child of God. The end of the world is coming. For all of us, it's coming within 50 to 100 years. Every single one of us is going to meet the end of the world for at least us.

Are we afraid of that? Are we afraid to die? As Christians, we should not be because we know we have already died in Christ in our baptisms. So we've already faced death and come out stronger on the other end because Christ has brought us out of death into life. So we're not afraid because for us to live is Christ, but to die is gain. That is the message that Christ wants us to understand. Living is great. Dying is better because we will see God face to face and not be afraid. Jesus came to the locked room to his disciples and he said, "Peace, be with you."

What does that mean? That God tells you that you have peace with him. No longer are you afraid of the judgment of God. No longer are you concerned that your sins are too great for God to love you. No longer are you wondering whether or not you are part of God's family or not. You know. You have been baptized. God has caused you to be born again. There is no doubt. There is confidence because we know that everything that was written down, everything that we've heard, everything that we have studied, we know it was written down so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing, we have life, life everlasting in his name, which he guards and keeps until the day of salvation for you and for me and for all people.

The joy of our salvation is so great that if we have to suffer a little bit for a temporary time here and now, it's worth it for the surpassing joy of knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because all that he did was for us. He died for us. He gives us his body and blood for us. He adopts us into the family by his name for our benefit. And how do we know this is all true? Because he has risen.

Congregation:

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Pastor:

Alleluia. Amen.