

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Faith  
Second Sunday of Easter  
John 20:19-31

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Joyful is the sound we make this morning!  
**For this day liberates us from doubt and fear.**

Thankful is the song we sing!  
**For this day moves us past darkness and despair.**

Hopeful is the prayer upon our lips!  
**For this day awakens in us long-awaited new life.**

May his peace and presence be known to you.  
**And also, to you**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow,  
we rejoice in this new day you have made.  
We praise you for the abundant life with which you bless us,  
and for all the beauty that surrounds us as spring takes hold again.  
We praise you for your Son Jesus,  
and the power of new life promised in his resurrection.  
We praise you for your Spirit at work in human history,  
to restore and redeem our hope with that power of new life.  
God of steadfast love,  
we worship you with the Spirit and the Son,  
and claim your gift of new life,  
even in the face of any doubt or danger within the world you love.  
All praise, honor and glory be yours, O God,  
now and evermore. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "He's Got the Whole World in his Hands"

**Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
Let us make our confession to God.

**Prayer of Confession**

**O God of might and mercy,  
in raising Jesus from the dead, you showed us your power  
to defeat all that brings fear and sorrow to our lives.  
In his resurrection, Jesus promised to be with us everywhere and always.  
Yet we confess we are sometimes uncertain about your promises.  
We doubt the promise of resurrection for our own lives.  
Upheaval and anxiety eat away at our peace.  
Forgive us when we struggle to trust your goodness  
and your steadfast love for us.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel.  
In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free from sin and sorrow.  
In Jesus Christ, God offers us the gift of peace.  
May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts this day.

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.**

**Opening Hymn #267: "Rejoice the Lord is King" (V 1,2,3)**

Rejoice, the Lord is King;  
your sovereign Lord adore;  
give thanks, O mortals, sing  
and triumph ever more.  
Lift up your heart;  
lift up your voice; rejoice,  
again I say, rejoice.

For Christ the Saviour reigns,  
the God of truth and love;  
when Jesus purged our stains,

he took his seat above.  
 Lift up your heart;  
 lift up your voice; rejoice,  
 again I say, rejoice.

His reign can never fail;  
 he rules o'er earth and heaven:  
 the keys of death and hell  
 are to our Saviour given.  
 Lift up your heart;  
 lift up your voice; rejoice,  
 again I say, rejoice.

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Psalm 16**

<sup>1</sup> Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

<sup>2</sup> **I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;  
 I have no good apart from you."**

<sup>3</sup> As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,  
 in whom is all my delight.

<sup>4</sup> **The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;  
 their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out  
 or take their names on my lips.**

<sup>5</sup> **The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;  
 you hold my lot.**

<sup>6</sup> **The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
 indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.**

<sup>7</sup> bless the LORD who gives me counsel;  
 in the night also my heart instructs me.

<sup>8</sup> **have set the LORD always before me;  
 because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.**

<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;  
 my flesh also dwells secure.

<sup>10</sup> **For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,  
 or let your holy one see corruption.**

<sup>11</sup> **You make known to me the path of life;  
 in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
 at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

**Anthem (Music Ministry): “I Can Do All Things” Choir**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture**

**John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

<sup>26</sup> 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.” <sup>27</sup> 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.” <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**Sermon**

The Lord is risen.

Does believing in the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the tomb require a leap of faith that goes beyond logic and reasoning, or can you come to faith in God through deduction alone? Or maybe it is a bit of both.

I ask this question because we know that this is the biggest challenge that many people faced on that first week after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and it still the biggest challenge that many face in the world today.

God gave all of humanity the power of reason to help us discover the truth about him, but we cannot rely on deduction alone. There is a point when we will have to move past deduction and take a leap of faith, moving from knowledge and understanding of the truth of who Jesus was into living our lives for him, trusting, and obeying him in every aspect of our lives.

This leap of faith is the hardest part of becoming a follower of Christ, that movement from the acceptance of what we discover in deduction into not just believing that Jesus was a good man who lived and changed the world to Jesus was the Son of God and we need to accept him as our Lord and Saviour.

The scientific world has a way in which they do this, a way in which they take the facts and then discover the truth behind the facts. If you ever watched star trek you likely heard Spock, say, 'Once you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.' This is a simplification of a scientific principle known as Occam's Razor which states, 'The simplest explanation for some phenomenon is more likely than those that are more complicated.'

William of Ockham, a fourteenth century scientist and a Franciscan monk came up with this as he was trying to teach people that 'God's existence cannot be deduced by reason alone' Which we see in the story of doubting Thomas.

**John 20:24-25**

**<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.**

**<sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."**

The disciples had all witnessed Jesus in their presence except for Thomas, and yet when they told Thomas about the truth of Jesus's resurrection, Thomas refused to believe. He could not take that leap of faith because in his mind people do not come back from the dead on their own. We gave him the name doubting Thomas because of his doubting the words of his brothers. We often say that he was weaker in his faith than the other apostles, however, this is not really fair to Thomas, we forget that.

**John 20:19-20**

**<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.**

When Jesus appeared to his disciples he showed them his wounds, they had already witnessed the very things that Thomas is requested to see. In fact, if we look at these events in the book of Luke, we discover that the disciples were not as solid in their faith when Jesus first appeared.

**Luke 24:36-41**

**<sup>36</sup> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"**

Just like Thomas the disciples doubted the words of the women when they returned from the tomb. When he first appeared, the disciples assumed that he was a ghost. Seeing their disbelief, Jesus gave them proof he showed them the wounds and had them touch him. Then after seeing, hearing, and touching the risen Lord they believed, and they began to spread the news of his resurrection even though it seemed to be farfetched. The reality is that the rest of the disciples were not really any different than Thomas, Thomas simply wanted to tangible proof that Jesus had in fact risen from the grave.

So why is it that so many of us believe without seeing, hearing, and touching the wounds of Christ? Are we more enlightened than the disciples? Maybe we are more spiritually mature than they were? Or perhaps we are more like them than we realize and while we have not physically touched the wounds of Jesus Christ we have touched and been touched by him in other ways.

If I told you that I had a quarter in my hand right now, would you believe me? Some of you would believe me simply because you trust me. Others might question it and want some form of proof before you believe. Still others might demand to see it with their own eyes, and to touch it with their own hand before they believe it is true.

Now what about if I told you that some John Doe who had recently passed away and been buried at the local cemetery arose from the grave and was down at Peter's diner. Would you believe me then? I am guessing that there would be many more people in the demanding to see with their own eyes and touch with their own hands than those who believe me because they trust me. But why? Why is it so much easier to believe me when I say I have a quarter than when I say I have seen the risen dead?

It is easy for us to believe that I have a quarter in my hand because it fits within the idea of our realities, it is in our comfort zone. Logic and reason tell us it is quite possible that I have a quarter and there is a fairly good chance that one could fit in my hand based upon the size of the quarter and the size of my hand.

Yet, to believe in the risen dead moves out of our comfort zone into the realm of the supernatural, it seems far-fetched and most people would doubt that I am telling the truth. Believing I hold a coin does not require a leap of faith, believing the dead have risen does. So many of us would want to head out the door and over to Peter's as fast as possible to see it

with our own eyes before we believed it was true. Some of us might even want to touch the person and get some sort of proof that they were really dead before we believe. And some people simply would stay where they are and refuse to believe, because it does not fit within their understanding of reality.

See we are not so different from the disciples. When we look at the fact of someone coming back from the dead, we share the same doubts that the disciples did. The doubts of Thomas become our own, it is in our very human nature to doubt things that we know are improbable, even after we have eliminated the impossible, in order to believe.

Yet for Christians, we somehow move past those doubts. How do we do this? Does God somehow block the doubts in our minds? For the vast majority of people in this world, choosing to believe that the Son of God came down to this world, lived his life and ministry on earth, was crucified, died, was buried and arose from the grave is something that they simply cannot wrap their heads around and believe, even when the historical facts all point to the truth of the events, the doubts outweigh the truths.

Truthfully even for those who believe, there are still times when we may doubt, and that is ok. When we doubt our faith and explore it, we often find that we have a stronger faith in the end.

So, whether we are a staunch believer or someone who is on the path to faith, we sometimes need to be promoted or supported in our moments of doubt so that we can come to a stronger faith in the Lord.

**John 20:26-27**

**<sup>26</sup> 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." <sup>27</sup> 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."**

Jesus said to Thomas, touch me here, feel the wounds, reach out your hand and put it into my side. Jesus was telling Thomas to investigate, to discover the truths that he needed to believe.

Jesus knew that for Thomas it was not enough to just hear the words of the other disciples, he knew it was not even enough that he just appears in front of him. Thomas needed to physically experience the Lord before he could move past the disbelief in his mind. So, Jesus encouraged him to do exactly that, to move past the doubts in his mind by investigating the reasons for his disbelief.

Jesus expected Thomas to use the power of logic and reason to aid him in discovery the truth that he needed to believe. This is the first step in the journey of faith for many people. A journey of investigation, however we quickly learn that faith cannot be attained by a simple intellectual exercise. After all, even the devil knows the truths of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection intellectually.

This is why William of Ockham said that we cannot reason ourselves into belief. Discovery of who our Lord Jesus Christ is might begin with logic and reason, even thoughtful contemplation, and meditation, however at some point in our journey we need to move beyond just thinking and onto discovering the truth with action. That is what Thomas was doing, when he physically moved his hand into the wound on the side of the risen Lord, he was trying to validate what Jesus claimed was true.

Jesus encourages us all to do this. To go out into the world around us and look for God, to discover his presence in the world around us and as we discover little sparks of truth, we have to make a choice to believe in them and allow them to become the flames of our faith.

Yet the truth is that there are people who have a really hard time believing, no matter how much evidence they find.

You see believing in God, is at the very core simply a choice that people make. Every human has the free will to choose to believe in God or to choose not to believe. And when the day of judgement arrives everyone will have made a choice, even those who are lukewarm and say that they don't really want to make a choice. In the eyes of God, not wanting to choose is the very same choice and not choosing God.

When Jesus tells Thomas to explore his doubts, he is telling Thomas to believe. He is saying to him 'Thomas, you have eliminated the impossible, and now what remains before you, however improbable, is the truth. Thomas based upon the truth that is standing here before you, make a choice. Believe or do not believe.'

Jesus was saying stop doubting and make a choice, stop being lukewarm and commit to either believing or denying God. And that is the same choice that Jesus encourages every human being on this planet to explore in their own lifetimes. To discover that He is indeed the way, the truth and the life and they need to make a choice.

The challenge is after we believe we have to move from belief to faith. We can believe in God and still not place our faith in Him.

There are many people who choose to not believe in God because they do not want to change their lifestyles, they do not want the responsibility of acting out their beliefs. The truth is that God is just as concerned about the ways in which we live, the ways in which we act out our faith and beliefs as the way we think about them.

To live in our belief requires a leap of faith that moves us beyond a reason and logic belief in Jesus as the Son of God into one that fills us completely heart, soul, body, and mind. A faith that fills us so completely it begins to flow out from us into the world around us.



When Thomas set aside his disbelief, he moved from a reasonable belief into a faith filled belief immediately. He explained, 'My Lord and my God.' Which might not seem significant to us, yet we need to recognize that he was actually the first to proclaim the risen Christ was one with God. Thomas was filled with a faith that extended from the top of his head to the very tips of his toes and it flowed from him in every aspect of his life.

When Jesus sent the disciples out to make disciples of the entire world, Thomas is the one who ventured the furthest away, he went to a place where the Jews were unknown to bring the message of the Gospel and the Good News of Salvation to the people of India. He wanted everyone he met to know all that Jesus had done for them, so that they too could experience the risen Lord in their lives.

When the love of the Lord filled him completely it flowed out of him in the love of his fellow man, his neighbor and that is the reality of what we are all called to do as we walk and the Salt and Light of God's Word in this broken world.

Let us pray,

**My Heart Rests in You**

Almighty God,  
 you care for me as if you thought of me alone,  
 and you care for all as if all were one.  
 I see the things of this earth pass away,  
 and I see other things take their place,  
 but you remain forever.  
 Therefore, my God and Father,  
 to you I entrust all I have received from you,  
 for then, I can lose nothing.  
 You, O Lord,  
 have made me for yourself,  
 and my heart can find no rest  
 until it rests in you.  
**Amen.**

Source: Augustine

**Hymn: "The Power of the Cross" (V 1,3,4)**

Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day  
 Christ on the road to Calvary  
 Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten then  
 Nailed to the cross of wood.

This the power of the cross  
 Christ became sin for us, took the blame, bore the wrath  
 We stand forgiven at the cross

Oh, to see the pain written on your face  
 Bearing the awesome weight of sin  
 Ev'ry bitter thought, ev'ry evil deed  
 Crowning your blood stained brow.

This the power of the cross  
 Christ became sin for us, took the blame, bore the wrath  
 We stand forgiven at the cross

Oh, to see my name written in the wounds  
 For through your suffering I am free  
 Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live  
 Won through your selfless love.

This the power of the cross  
 Son of God slain for us, what a love what a cost  
 We stand forgiven at the cross

### **Invitation to Offering**

### **Offering**

### **Offertory Prayer** **(Congregant Prepared)**

### **Closing Hymn #321: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" (V 1,2,4)**

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,  
 who rules all creation!  
 My soul, praise God who alone is your  
 health and salvation!  
 Come all who hear,  
 Sisters and brothers draw near,  
 Joining in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, who in all  
 things so wondrously reigning,  
 hides you with sheltering wings,  
 ever gently sustaining.

have you not seen  
 How your heart's wishes have been  
 Granted through God's kind ordaining?

Praise to the Lord! And with all that  
 is in me adoring,  
 All who have life and breath, come  
 with glad praises outpouring!  
 Let the Amen  
 Sound from God's people again;  
 Now and forever adoring!

### **Pastoral Prayer**

We thank you, God, for the many ways you provide for our needs:  
 for air and water, for food and shelter, for work to do and rest to sustain us.  
 We pray for your creation,  
 Help us care for the earth and all its creatures and relationships.  
 Show us how to cherish the gifts you have given  
 and protect them for future generations.

We thank you, God, for family:  
 the families we were born or adopted into,  
 the families we married into,  
 and other families who welcomed us into their midst  
 as friends and neighbours.  
 We pray for those who have lost family members and relationships,  
 and for any who know abuse and pain within the family circle.

God, we also thank you for friendship:  
 for friends who have supported us  
 and for those who bring us joy and wise counsel.  
 Help us extend the gift of friendship  
 to those who are experiencing isolation, loneliness, or grief.

We thank you, God, for the peace and freedom we enjoy in Canada,  
 and pray that the conflict over what these gifts mean  
 will be soothed with deeper understanding among us all.  
 We pray for those who know neither freedom nor peace:  
 those living under oppressive regimes or in conflict zones,  
 and those who have fled their homelands, in search of safety.  
 Give us courage to stand up for people who cannot stand up for themselves,  
 so that they too will know peace and freedom.

We thank you, God, for your Church,  
for our congregation and its leaders,  
and for all who volunteer time, talent, and energy  
to the work we undertake in Jesus' name.

By your Spirit, guide us as we shine your light in this community  
and inspire us with new insight into mission and ministry.  
We pray for other churches in our community and in our presbytery,  
and the sense of mission that guides each one into service.

Fill us with a deeper sense of unity  
so that we can model relationships that transcend differences  
in this divided world.

O God, thank you for the gift of your Son,  
whose resurrection empowers us to look to the future with hope.  
Thank you for the gift of your Spirit  
who draws us into unity with you and one another,  
as together we offer our prayers to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

### **Benediction**

Grace to you and peace  
from him who is and who was and who is to come,  
and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,  
and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead,  
and the ruler of the kings of the earth.  
To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,  
and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father,  
to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. **Amen.**