

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Christ Risen, Faith Awakened  
Fifth Sunday of Epiphany  
John 20:19-31**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come.  
**We come to worship the living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

The Lord is risen indeed.  
**He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!**

Though we come with fears and burdens, the Lord stands among His people.  
**He speaks peace to us and calls us to believe.**

Let us lift up our hearts to the Lord.  
**We lift them up to the Lord, who gives us life in His name.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Holy and eternal God,  
You are the Lord of life,  
the God who calls things that are not as though they were.  
You are light without darkness,  
truth without shadow,  
power without weakness,  
and mercy without end.  
We adore You as the living God,  
whose purposes cannot be thwarted  
and whose promises never fail.  
We bless You for Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ  
crucified for our sins,  
raised for our justification,  
exalted in glory,

and present with His people by the Holy Spirit.

In Him, death has been defeated,  
 sin has been broken,  
 and peace has been secured for all who trust in Him.  
 Now, gracious God,  
 we ask that You would draw near to us as we draw near to You.  
 By Your Holy Spirit,  
 open our hearts,  
 quiet our fears,  
 and fix our eyes upon Christ.  
 Enable us to worship You in spirit and in truth,  
 not trusting in ourselves,  
 but resting fully in Your grace.  
 All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **Call to Confession**

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

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Merciful Father,**  
**We confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed.**  
**Though You have revealed Yourself clearly,**  
**we are often slow to believe and quick to doubt.**  
**Though You have spoken peace, we cling to fear.**  
**Though You have called us to trust, we demand signs and proofs on our own terms.**  
**We confess that we have not loved You with our whole heart,**  
**nor have we loved our neighbors as ourselves.**  
**We have trusted in our understanding rather than Your Word,**  
**and we have relied on our strength rather than Your grace.**  
**Forgive us, O Lord.**  
**Have mercy upon us for the sake of Jesus Christ,**  
**who bore our sin,**  
**suffered in our place,**  
**and rose in victory.**  
**Cleanse us by Your Holy Spirit,**  
**restore our joy,**  
**and lead us in the way everlasting.**

**Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news of the gospel:

Jesus Christ was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

All who believe in Him receive forgiveness of sins through His name.

In Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

**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.**

**Hymn #305: "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens" (V 1,2,4)**

God, who stretched the spangled heavens,

infinite in time and place,

flung the suns in burning radiance

through the silent fields of space,

we, your children, in your likeness,

share inventive powers with you.

Great Creator, still creating,

show us what we yet may do.

Proudly rise our modern cities,

stately buildings row on row;

yet their windows, blank, unfeeling,

stare on canyoned streets below,

where the lonely drift unnoticed

in the city's ebb and flow,

lost to purpose and to meaning,

scarcely caring where they go.

As each far horizon beckons,

may it challenge us anew,

children of creative purpose,

serving others, honoring you.

May our dreams prove rich with promise,  
 each endeavor well begun.  
 Great Creator, give us guidance  
 till our goals and yours are one.

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Psalm 118:14-18**

<sup>14</sup>The Lord is my strength and my song;  
 he has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup>**Glad songs of salvation  
 are in the tents of the righteous:  
 “The right hand of the Lord does valiantly,  
<sup>16</sup>the right hand of the Lord exalts,  
 the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!”**

<sup>17</sup>I shall not die, but I shall live,  
 and recount the deeds of the Lord.

<sup>18</sup>**The Lord has disciplined me severely,  
 but he has not given me over to death.**

### **Anthem (Music Ministry): “Song for Worship”**

#### **Prayer for Illumination**

#### **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.”**

##### **Jesus and Thomas**

<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."

#### **The Purpose of This Book**

<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**

Over the last few weeks, we have stood in the shadow of the cross and witnessed the silence of the tomb. We saw the body of Jesus Christ, His body broken, His side pierced, His lifeless body lain to rest in a borrowed tomb.

John held us there, asking us to focus for a moment on the weight of the sacrifice that was made upon the cross, he did not soften the brutality of Jesus's substitution in our place, he does not allow us to escape the truth that Jesus Christ suffered and died and took on the whole wrath of God in our place.

And when John starts chapter 20, it is not with a declaration of victory or triumph. Instead, he begins in the darkness of the tomb, both literally and spiritually. That empty tomb did not initially produce hope and faith, instead it produced sorrow and confusion. Mary arrives at the tomb in the dark of dawn not realizing that the light of the resurrection has already occurred.

We saw faith appear before understanding, Peter and John raced to the tomb with a sense of urgency and no understanding. John believed before he understood how the Scriptures had been fulfilled. Mary wept in the presence of angels and Jesus met her in person, not with an explanation of all that occurred, but by reminding her of the personal relationship they had, he called her by name, and her sorrow was transformed into joy.

The resurrection did not erase grief by denying it, instead it overcame grief by forcing us to face it head on. The stone was rolled away not so that Jesus could escape the tomb, but so that we could look in and see that death had been overcome.

That is where we left off: the risen Christ revealed, faith awakening, hope beginning to breathe. And now, as we continue, John will show us what the resurrection does among Christ's gathered people. How the presence of the living Lord comes to fearful disciples, speaks peace, commissions His church, and calls even the doubting heart to faith.

**John 20:19**

**<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."**

On the same day in the evening the disciples are gathered together behind locked doors. The resurrection has already occurred. The tomb is empty. Mary has seen the Lord.

In the other Gospels, the women have clung to His feet. Two weary disciples have felt their hearts burn on the road to Emmaus. Peter himself has encountered the risen Christ.

And now, as the day closes, fear still dominates the disciples in the room. John tells us they were assembled 'for fear of the Jews.' Resurrection truth has not yet driven out crucifixion terror. The disciples believe something has happened, but they do not yet understand what it means for them.

It is into this locked room, into this fearful fellowship, that Jesus suddenly comes and stands in the midst. John is deliberate in his word choice yet again.

The doors were not merely closed; they were secured. The Greek suggests they were fastened, barred against intrusion from the inside. And yet Jesus is not hindered. He does not knock. He does not wait. He does not ask permission. He simply appears.

Augustine saw in this moment a preview of the glorified body: He entered where doors were shut, not because the door yielded, but because the body was not hindered.'

The resurrection body is real, physical, and no longer bound by corruption. As Paul will later say, it is raised in power, raised in glory.

But more important than how Jesus entered is why He entered.

He could have gone anywhere. He could have appeared in the temple before the Sanhedrin, or to Pilate himself. Instead, He comes to His people. The Shepherd gathers the scattered sheep. The risen Lord comes not to astonish the world but to comfort His own. And His first word is not rebuke. It is not correction. It is not disappointment. It is peace.

'Peace be with you.' Eirēnē hymin. This is not a casual greeting. This is covenant language.

This is the peace promised in Isaiah, the peace secured by the suffering servant, the peace Paul will later describe as reconciliation accomplished through the blood of the cross.

Christ does not merely wish peace, He bestows it. The disciples who fled. The disciples who denied. The disciples who doubted. They receive peace. Not because they deserve it, but because Christ has finished His work upon the cross.

**John 20:20-23**

**<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."**

Having spoken peace, Jesus then shows them His hands and His side. His wounds remain. The scars are visible. Resurrection has not erased the marks of His sacrifice.

The cross is not undone by the empty tomb; it is vindicated by it.

Leo the Great wrote, 'The marks of the Passion were retained for the strengthening of faith.'

This is the same Jesus. The same body. The same Lord. Not a spirit. Not a vision. Not a memory. The disciples rejoice because they see the Lord.

And once again, Jesus speaks peace. The repetition matters. This is not merely peace from fear, but peace for mission. 'As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.'

The verb used here is 'apostellō' and it reminds us that the church is not accidental. We are a sent people. Mission does not begin in Acts; it begins in the heart of the Triune God. The Father sends the Son. The Son sends the church. And we are sent not as conquerors, not as philosophers, but as witnesses. As Christ came in humility, truth, suffering, and obedience, so His people go.

Then Jesus breathes on them. 'Enephysēsen'. The word is rare and deliberate. It echoes Genesis 2, when God breathed life into Adam. It echoes Ezekiel 37, when the breath enters dry bones and they live.

This is new creation. This is regeneration. Augustine saw this moment as the inward gift of the Spirit, distinct from the outward empowerment at Pentecost. The disciples are made alive so that they may later be made bold. Life precedes power. Being precedes doing.

And with the Spirit comes authority. Not autonomous authority. Not priestly power to manufacture forgiveness. But Gospel authority to declare what heaven has already decreed.

The church binds and looses by proclaiming Christ crucified and risen. Where repentance and faith are present, forgiveness is announced. Where Christ is rejected, judgment is warned. The church does not forgive sins by its own power, but ministerially, by the Word and Spirit.

**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.”**

What is interesting is that Thomas was not there. Scripture does not tell us why. He is not condemned for his absence, but he suffers its consequence.

He does not see the Lord. And when the others testify, he refuses to believe. His words are strong. “I will not believe.” This is not doubt seeking understanding; this is unbelief demanding control. Thomas insists on seeing and touching. He demands evidence on his terms.

Yet even here, Thomas is honest. He does not pretend faith he does not possess. And he remains among the disciples. Gregory the Great famously said, “The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith than the belief of the other disciples.” God will use even stubborn unbelief to magnify His grace.

Indeed, Thomas’s story is a comfort for all who struggle in their faith. His demand for tangible proof resonates with those who wrestle with faith in the face of suffering, disappointment, or unanswered questions. The narrative does not condemn Thomas, but it does show the limitations of a faith that insists on its own conditions. The journey from skepticism to faith is not linear; it often involves wrestling, waiting, and the willingness to remain in community despite doubts.

The Gospel honors his questions, meeting him where he is. This section challenges us to create communities where honest doubt is welcomed, where questions are not silenced but explored, and where faith is nurtured through patient engagement. Thomas’s skepticism becomes a doorway to deeper faith, reminding us that the path to belief often passes through the valley of honest questioning.

**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.”**

One week later, the doors were still shut. Fear lingers. But so does Christ. He comes again. Same greeting. Same peace. And then He turns directly to Thomas. Jesus repeats his very words. He knows them. He has heard them. Nothing is hidden. And yet there is no harshness. No humiliation. Only invitation. “Reach here. See. Touch. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

Jesus meets Thomas at the point of his demand, not to validate his skepticism, but to extend grace. Faith is commanded, unbelief is challenged, but mercy is offered. Bernard of Clairvaux’s insight that the wounds of Christ are the refuge of the doubting soul is profound. When assurance falters, Christ does not direct us inward to our own resources, but outward to His wounds—the ultimate evidence of His love and victory.

This encounter reveals the patience and compassion of the risen Lord. Jesus does not abandon those who struggle with doubt; He seeks them out, meets them where they are, and invites them to deeper faith. The narrative affirms that faith is not the absence of questions, but the willingness to trust Christ in the midst of them. The wounds that once symbolized defeat now become the source of assurance and hope.

Jesus’ approach to Thomas is a model for pastoral care and spiritual formation. He does not shame or exclude those who struggle but invites them to encounter His love in the midst of their questions. The invitation to touch and see is an invitation to personal relationship, to move beyond intellectual assent to personal encounter. This section encourages us to be patient with our own doubts and with those of others, trusting that Christ meets us in our weakness and leads us to deeper faith.

**John 20:28-29**

**<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.”**

And suddenly, Thomas believes. He does not merely confess resurrection. He confesses deity. “My Lord and my God.” This is the highest Christological confession in the Gospel. This is not a mere exclamation, but an act of adoration. A Jewish monotheist stands before a wounded, risen man and calls Him God. And Jesus receives the worship. He does not correct Thomas. He accepts the confession, affirming its truth.

This is not an exclamation. It is adoration. It is personal. My Lord. My God. The resurrection has shattered Thomas’ categories and reformed his theology. The wounds that once

symbolized defeat now proclaim glory. And Jesus pronounces a blessing—not only on Thomas, but on all who will come later. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. That blessing rests on the church. On every believer who trusts the apostolic witness. On every saint who walks by faith and not by sight.

**John 20:30-31**

**<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.**

John closes with purpose. He has not written everything. He has written enough. Enough to reveal who Jesus is. Enough to call for faith. Enough to grant life.

The Gospel is not intended to provoke doubt or speculation, but to lead to belief and salvation. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing, we have life in His name.

This life is not mere existence or morality; it is eternal, resurrection life—secured by Christ’s wounds, declared in His peace, and offered freely to all who believe. John’s selective narration underscores the sufficiency of the apostolic witness. We are invited to trust what has been revealed, to embrace the life that Christ offers, and to join the community of those who walk by faith.

The Gospel’s purpose is both evangelistic and pastoral. It calls unbelievers to faith and believers to assurance. It anchors hope in the person and work of Jesus, inviting all to experience the fullness of life that comes through Him. The narrative ends with an open invitation: the story is not finished, for each generation is called to encounter the risen Christ and to find life in His name.

This final section of the Scripture today challenges us to consider our response to the Gospel. It is not a collection of facts to be debated, but a living testimony to be received and embodied. The invitation is ongoing, extending to every reader, every listener, every seeker. The Gospel’s purpose is to draw us into relationship with the risen Lord, to anchor our hope in His finished work, and to empower us to live as witnesses to His resurrection. The story continues in us, as we embrace the life that is found in His name and walk as the Salt and Light of His Word in this dark and broken world.

Let us pray,  
 Gracious and almighty God,  
 As we live in a world marked by brokenness  
 and under the weight of sin,

teach us to flee to Christ alone for refuge.  
 Since He has appeared for our salvation and,  
 by His resurrection, has defeated death,  
 grant that we would rest in Him with a firm and living faith.  
 May we trust Him not only with our lips,  
 but with our whole lives,  
 so that, sustained by His grace,  
 we may persevere to the end  
 and at last attain the blessed resurrection purchased for us by His blood.  
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

*John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles,*

### **Invitation to Offering**

### **Offering Prayer**

### **Closing Hymn #366: "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts"**

Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts,  
 Thou Fount, thou Light for all to see,  
 From the best bliss that earth imparts,  
 We turn unfilled again to Thee.

Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;  
 Thou savest those that on Thee call;  
 To them that seek Thee Thou art good,  
 To those who find Thee, all in all.

O Jesus, ever with us stay,  
 Make all our moments calm and bright;  
 Chase the dark night of sin away,  
 Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Gracious and faithful God,  
 We thank You for Your Word,  
 living and active,

sharper than any two-edged sword.  
We thank You that You are patient with our weakness  
and kind toward our unbelief.  
Strengthen our faith, we pray  
not by sight, but by trust in Your promises.

Send us into the world as those who belong to Christ,  
bearing witness to His truth,  
living in the power of His resurrection,  
and resting in the peace He gives.  
Where there is fear, make us confident.  
Where there is doubt, make us steadfast.  
Where there is weariness, make us strong.

Keep us in Your grace,  
guard us by Your power,  
and use us for Your glory,  
until the day we see our Savior face to face.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray.  
**Amen.**

### **Benediction**

Now may the God of peace,  
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,  
the great Shepherd of the sheep,  
equip you with everything good that you may do His will,  
working in you that which is pleasing in His sight,  
through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.