

Lectionary A April 23, 2017 Easter 2  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana  
Rev. Roberta Meyer  
Acts 2:14a, 22-32  
Psalm 16  
1 Peter 1:3-9  
John 20:19-31

### Jesus Shows Up

It is time for the story of “Doubting Thomas” again. Every year we hear this story. It is so familiar that maybe we don’t see the real miracle it proclaims. What if we don’t focus on that poor dude, Thomas, and instead let’s really look at Jesus in this story. What does Jesus do here?

First of all, it was in the evening on the day when Jesus rose from that Tomb and scared the guards so bad they were frozen stiff as statues. That’s when the women were told by an angel and Jesus to Not be afraid and to go tell the disciples about Jesus’ breaking out of the tomb. And that is what the women did. So where did Jesus find his illustrious disciples?

It says, “*the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews,*” They ran and hid behind locked doors. Jesus found them scared and hiding. What was the first thing he said to them? “*Peace be with you.*” Jesus said this to them twice, once when he first appeared to them and again after he showed them the scars on his hands and side. “*Peace be with you.*”

Then like he did with the women in last week’s story, Jesus gave the disciples a job to do. “*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*” Now, Jesus didn’t expect them to go on this mission without being equipped, so Jesus got them ready. <sup>22</sup>*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 retain the sins of any, they are retained.”* This is an important mission, with an important responsibility. Jesus’ breath equipped them for their task.

One small hitch. All the disciples were not there that evening. Thomas wasn’t there. We don’t know where he was or what he was doing. All we know is Thomas was not in that locked room that first Easter evening. So on who better should the disciples try out their new mission? They tell Thomas what happened to them behind locked doors. “*We have seen the Lord.*”

Now, tell me one good reason Thomas should just take what they say at face value. These are the guys who wouldn’t believe what Jesus was telling them for the last three years. They are the ones who ran away and denied knowing Jesus when he was arrested. And here they are huddled together like a bunch of scared chickens shaking in the corner of their locked roost. No, Thomas needed more proof than the words of these buffoons. “*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.*”

What does Jesus do about this? The next week Jesus finds all the disciples, including Thomas, where? In that room again. The Message Bible describes the scene. “*The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them and greeting them.*”

*“Peace be with you.”* Jesus went right 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.”*

That is all Thomas needed. Thomas proclaimed, *“My Lord, and my God!”*

We all doubt at times. Crazy things happen in our lives. Illness, death of loved ones, lost jobs, terrorism, bigotry, injustice, war...I know we can all add to this list with specifics. We read about child molesters in our own city. Parents who neglect their children. Robberies, murders, our young boys fighting and shooting at each other in the streets. More terrorist attacks.

There are lots of reasons to doubt.

Jesus knows this. So, what does Jesus do about it? Jesus shows up. And Jesus shows up again. Look at these disciples. Jesus came to them. Gave them proof of his resurrection and the next week, where are they? Still in that locked room. Jesus doesn't criticize or condemn, he just comes back with the same message. *“Peace be with you.”*

Jesus gave Thomas what he needed to believe. And Jesus gives us what we need. This story tells me that Jesus understands when we doubt. Doubting is part of learning and growing. This is the miracle I am talking about in this story. Doubting and questioning gets us out from behind those closed doors where we stay for safety's sake. If we don't question our beliefs, we stay locked inside those stagnant places. New growth is stifled.

So, when we doubt our faith, Jesus shows up. Jesus may show up in a smile from a stranger, an unexpected gift, or even a rainbow on a stormy day, a puppy kiss, or a phone call from a friend. Jesus is in those moments that we often say, “come at just the right time—we are refreshed. “I needed that.” In those times resurrection comes to us. We see things in a new light. Jesus' breath awakens us. The Holy Spirit equips us.

And if we find ourselves back in that locked room the next week? Jesus shows up again and again. At the end of our Gospel story we are told that *Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.* <sup>31</sup>*But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*

*So that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.* This story isn't about Thomas. This story is about you and me. It is written for our benefit, so that we may come to believe that Jesus is God's Son and through our believing we will have life in Jesus' name. This story written some 2000 years ago was written just for us, here today.

I think we misinterpret what Jesus says to Thomas as a reprimand. *“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”* Jesus is really giving us a miraculous gift. This is our blessing. We are the ones who have not seen and yet believe.

So today when we come to the Lord's table, let's see this meal for what it is. Jesus is showing

up. Jesus is showing up to strengthen our faith and equip us with the Holy Spirit so we will go tell this story to others who might be huddled, scared and doubting, in their own locked rooms.

Through our own stories of Jesus showing up we can carry this message to those around us with confidence.

*“Peace be with you.”* What a miraculous gift. Alleluia!