

April 11th Worship
2nd Sunday in Easter

Introduction to the Day

The Easter season is a week of weeks, seven Sundays when we play in the mystery of Christ's presence, mostly through the glorious Gospel of John. Today we gather with the disciples on the first Easter, and Jesus breathes the Spirit on us. With Thomas we ask for a sign, and Jesus offers us his wounded self in the broken bread. From frightened individuals we are transformed into a community of open doors, peace, forgiveness, and material sharing such that no one among us is in need.

Thanksgiving For Baptism

Alleluia! Christ is risen.
Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ,

for these waters where you make us new,
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.

We bless you, risen Christ,
that your Spirit comes to us
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,
like rains to our thirsting earth,
like streams that revive our souls,
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church
when we hide in fear.
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.
Send us companions on our journey
as we share your life.
Make us one, risen Christ.
Cleanse our hearts.
Shower us with life.
To you be given all praise,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God,
now and forever.
Amen.

Prayer of the Day

God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Acts 4:32-35

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Gospel – John 20:19-31

¹⁹When 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." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven

them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So 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.”

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

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But 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.

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

When we hear this Gospel text, we almost immediately jump to the Doubting, or unbelieving if you will, Thomas. And rightfully so, for a few reasons.

- 1) It takes up most of this Gospel text. It is easy to gloss over that which comes before because the scene ends, and then replays itself telling us that Thomas wasn't present. The repetition of those twelve verses drives home this idea for us that this is a Gospel exchange about Thomas and his disbelief, or doubt. And we could talk about how we really just give Thomas a hard time for thinking much of the same things that we would be thinking, but I digress.
- 2) We can relate. We relate to what Thomas is feeling and experiencing in this story. Think of the most amazing experience you have ever missed. Perhaps you've got family or friends who experienced this most amazing thing and when you hear about it, “it seems too good to be true” in fact, “you'd have to see it to believe it. It's human nature. The term for it is FOMO – Fear Of Missing Out. We want to be a part of those big things. We want those experiences. And sometimes, the story is told so well over and over and over again that eventually we get to the point of feeling like we were indeed there. Thomas just wanted that experience.

But, in being gripped by how we might relate to Thomas, or our desire to find a scapegoat or someone to point fingers at in the wonder and mystery of this story, we miss the point.

Just days ago, Jesus' followers saw him on the cross. They saw him hanging there, hoping that they wouldn't be recognized as his followers for fear of what may happen, but they undoubtedly got a glimpse of their teacher hanging there on the cross today.

In his hanging there Jesus gave us his final message before death. Many churches around the world will celebrate (weird word) Good Friday with a retelling of the Seven Last Words of Christ. It is one of the cherished worship services here at Good Shepherd and it was a collaborative effort of the Eau Claire ELCA Churches this year. We are reminded of the words that Jesus speaks from the cross. Hope, compassion, solidarity, identity, victory, and peace.

But, in his return to his disciples Jesus echoes his first words from the cross – and this is a central theme in John’s Gospel.

Forgiveness. His first words from the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” echo the words that he shares with his disciples (after bringing them peace, of course, because they were rightfully frightened), “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

In his return, his reappearance to his disciples, after they’ve heard the Good News from Mary early on that day, and spent the day doing Lord knows what, he appears to them in the evening and breathes on them, “receive the Holy Spirit,” and gives them the commandment to forgive.

If we couple this with the message Jesus gave to his disciples on Maundy Thursday, we start to see what Jesus thinks is central to the continued life of his ministry on earth.

Maundy Thursday – Love. If you are mine you will love and those whom you encounter will know that you are mine because of the love you have.

Easter Evening – Forgive. As the Father has sent me so I send you. Go and forgive.

These two commands are a constant struggle for us as people of faith. Jesus commands us to love the unlovable and forgive the unforgivable.

Beyond telling us to forgive, we are told that if we are to retain any, not forgive them, they are retained. He takes this call to forgive a step further and urges us into action, he urges his followers not to hold onto those things that need forgiving.

Now, we know that forgiveness is a two-way street. We know that to forgive is to give up something. We know that sometimes it is even easier to let it fester, and even hold a grudge. But, again, Jesus calls us to forgive the sins of ANY.

Just as Jesus looked at the unforgivable Nicodemus in John 3:16 and told him that God loved the WORLD and proceeded to show us what that means throughout the rest of John’s Gospel, Jesus here, after his resurrection, tells his disciples that his death and resurrection is for the forgiveness of sins, for ANY who seek it.

If there is a story that is to be told about Christ’s death and resurrection it is that in this God in Jesus Christ has defeated sin, death, and the power of the devil so that we might have life and have it abundantly.

He calls us, his BELOVED, into a live of LOVE and FORGIVENESS. If the world is to know who and whose we are we are going to hang our life on those two things.

We are to love in service to one another, and the world will know that we are his if we BE LOVE.

If we are to live as a people forgiven, then we are to live as a people who forgive.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

You shower your church with grace, O God. Unite the whole church on earth, so that with one heart it testifies to the resurrection of Jesus Christ with power and love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You proclaim the blessing of life forevermore. Like dew upon the mountains, refresh your creation. Restore waters, cleanse the air, and provide revitalizing moisture to parched land. Give your whole creation the promise of new life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You direct the nations, O God. Guide all in authority, that they shepherd their peoples in the ways of your love. Defeat in us our impulse to war. Bestow the peace of Christ upon those in authority and breathe upon them the Holy Spirit. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You place within the heart of the church a spirit of sharing. Give us the power of your generous Spirit, that we provide for the needs of others. Announce your peace to those who are lonely, hurting, suffering, or afraid. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You give us fellowship with one another in this faith community. Shine the light of the risen Christ in our life together, so that we live in love for one another and our joy may be complete. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You share the gift of eternal life. In thanksgiving and remembrance, we recall the lives and gifts of those who now live in endless joy. Unite us with them in resurrection hope. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

God of love,
you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table.

Receive our lives and the gifts we offer.

Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world;
for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, "This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it for all to drink saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. So often as you do this, remember me."

Once you've taken the elements say, "Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom
to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life,

Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,

bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

PLANS TO RE-OPEN FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP

At their most recent meeting, the Leadership Team of Good Shepherd decided to move ahead with plans to hold in-person worship starting on May 2. Further details will be coming next week with what those plans are, and what protocols will be in place, to make this the safest worship option for those who choose to use it. For now, make your plans to join us in person for one of two services on Sundays for the month of May!

Re-Connect Opportunities

We hope you will join us for any, or all, of these Re-Connect Opportunities throughout the week!

Stop in for coffee and conversation at 9 am on Mondays

TUESDAYS be sure to stop by for Bible Study starting at 11, followed by Lunch and Laughter at noon.

Wednesdays will continue to be our Faith Formation Days

Thursdays we will have the sanctuary open for prayer for 8 am to 3 pm.

Building/Grounds Spring Clean-Up Work Days

Join your church family NEXT WEEKEND to spruce up the church for when we re-open. We will have a work project weekend, April 17 and 18, to get the Good Shepherd property looking beautiful for when we welcome you back through our doors!