



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

April 16, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

2nd Sunday of Easter

First Lesson: [Acts 10:34a, 36, 39-45](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 16

Second Lesson: [1 Peter 1:3-9](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 20:19-31](#)

The Redeemer Lives! He Lives to Give Me Proof and Peace

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

I understand the phrase, "Seeing is believing." I think probably every January as you're talking with people about their New Year's resolutions, you think to yourself or say out loud (depending on how well you know them) "I'll believe it when I see it." "This year I'm going to get serious about exercising and eating right, blah, blah..." "Yeah, I'll believe it when I see it, pastor." That's just the way it is. I understand that, but I really don't think that's what God teaches us.

I think God teaches us "seeing is seeing" and "believing is believing." Faith isn't something that depends on our sight, our reason, our knowledge, or our rational thoughts. By nature we are all dead in our sins. You don't play fetch with a dead dog, and we are spiritual dead dogs. We can't see it, decide and then believe. It's a gift of God that God works through the message that Christ has risen. Your sins are forgiven. It is finished. He did it all. He was perfect in your place. He died in your place. Believe this and it's yours! And the Spirit works the gift so that the dead, spiritual dog (you and me) becomes alive. This is all the gift of God. Seeing is something we do. Believing is a gift that God gives to us.

That's really driven home today as we look at the account of Thomas. Can I understand Thomas' doubts? Yes, I'm a sinner. I can understand doubting God. How often in your daily life don't you encounter things that makes the devil pop into your head and think "Does God really love me if He's letting this happen or that happen?" I understand that. It's something we face all the time. But I think our Lord is encouraging is to believe even

when we can't see because the proof of His resurrection, from all the prophets ahead of time saying it would happen to all of the witnesses of it, is what brings us this peace.

Think about it for a minute. Can you put yourselves in the shoes of the apostles that were there without Thomas that first day of the week, that Easter Sunday? Reports had come back that Jesus had risen. Peter ran out to the gravesite. The grave was empty. The grave clothes were there but they didn't find Jesus. They heard the women talking about seeing Jesus, even grabbing His feet and all these various things. Yet they are still in that Upper Room because they're afraid of what the Jewish leaders might do to them. Their heads are swirling. There are all these reports. And with the doors locked, Jesus comes and stands among you and says, "Peace be with you." He shows you His hands, His side. He shows you that when He said "Because I live, you also will live," He knew what He was talking about.

When it says the disciples were **overjoyed**, do you think that's a little bit of an understatement? Do you think John is soft-selling it a little bit there? **The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.** Can you imagine the emotions and the thoughts and the joy and how they would not even be able to put it into words? They are so excited that when Thomas comes, they tell Thomas all about it and Thomas (instead of "Didymus," maybe he should have been "Gloomy Gus"), "Unless I put my fingers in there and put my hand in His side, I won't believe it. You guys are all nuts!"

What do you think the next week was like? If the apostles got together anytime during that week and had a meal together or every day and had a meal together, what do you think that was like as 10 of them are buzzing and talking about, "What did He mean, go to Galilee? Can you believe that you could still see this? Did you see how He was completely alive?" They are talking about all that and there is Thomas, sitting there looking at his porridge, looking kind of irritated and thinking "I still am not going to believe you guys." What a miserable week that had to be for Thomas. Did you ever stop and think about that? How awful it must have been to be surrounded by all of that joy and excitement of the Christian faith and he is a stick-in-the-mud. That had to be awful! The peace that was right there in front of him, the peace that was around him that these other people had because they believed Jesus had risen, and Thomas is saying "Unless I see it, I'm not going to believe it."

Do you know anybody like that? Do you know anybody like that who is living without peace, without Christian joy because maybe they think "These things that have come into my life, I can't believe in a God that would let this happen." I run into those people. How about you? Or the people that say "You know, I've done so many bad things. There is no way God could forgive me. I could never make up for it in a million years." So they maybe devote themselves to trying to make up for their own sins and it's just heaping more guilt on their shoulders. Do you know anybody like that?

Do you know anybody that is going through life without the joy of knowing they are forgiven? Did you hear what Jesus said not only to the apostles but to you on that first Easter evening? It says that **he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."** And then He entrusted them to the Ministry of the Keys. **"If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."** Why did He give them those Keys on that incredible first day of the week? It's because He is desperate for people to have peace, and He was calling the apostles and you to be the messengers of this peace.

We are the people that show people that are caught up in their sin and think God couldn't forgive them, God already has. Christ lived and died in their place. Through faith in Christ, you are forgiven as certain on earth as it is in heaven through faith in Jesus Christ, that He did this for you. **"...blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** You and I are the instruments the Spirit uses to bring that blessing to people.

But the devil convinces us that it's not our job and that it's someone else's job. Luther said it well that the Ministry of the Keys is that special rite, that special privilege that God has given to His Church on earth. Not to the leaders of His Church on earth; to His Church on earth, to the people. God wants the peace of the resurrection to live in the hearts of ALL. Yes, there are going to be those that are going to reject it. There are going to be those that are going to drift away from it. But God has called us to reach out to them so that they might have this peace so they don't have to go through life with that absolute hopelessness that Thomas must have had that week.

We are the conveyors of hope. We are the ones that share this faith with others. The peace it brings is an eternal peace; the knowledge that our God loves us so much. What was He willing to give for us? He was willing to give His Son. And what was He willing to do? He was willing to turn a ragtag group of people into this group that set the world on fire with the Gospel. I would say He is waiting to do it again today, wherever we are in our community, as we share the Gospel and set the world on fire with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not just assuming everyone knows it, but speaking it, proclaiming it, living it and sharing it. Not talking about the things we do but talking about the things Jesus did for us and for others. This is what God has called us to.

We often fail Him. We often fall short. We often assume that it's someone else's task. We often think "If I talk about what I do, then I'm really sharing Jesus." No, sharing Jesus is talking about what He did. What He did is He died for all the times that we screw all that up. We are still His forgiven children. We have this peace because we have the proof of the Word and the sacraments. We have the proof of the Spirit that lives in our hearts, who has given us this gift of faith which we could never have on our own. We have all of this and it is a peace that is not lessened when we share it with others. And this is what our God has called us to do.

Share it with others. Bring them that blessing of having the Spirit give them the gift of faith even though they haven't seen Jesus. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.