

Sermon for Sunday April 12 2026

The Journey to Easter..., Easter 2 (A) – John 20:19-31

The journey to Easter is one filled with questioning and reconciliation as we follow the narrative that brings us to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. These stories provide many examples of what God would have us do and be through the living example of his son, Jesus. We even experience through Jesus the mystery of belief complete with its companions: questioning, doubt, and obedience.

The mystery and complexity of belief is woven throughout scripture. They are at the heart of what it means to be Christian, making the stories of mystery and belief essential for our own understanding of faith and challenging our ability to share that part of ourselves with everyone we encounter in obedience.

Aside from the miracle of creation, for which there were no witnesses, most of the stories in scripture invite us into believing through the relationships of others. Take for example the mystery shrouding Mary's conception or the miracle for Elizabeth both as she recognizes the child Mary bears to be Jesus and as her own unborn child leaps — already going ahead, announcing Jesus. Or consider the miracle of Lazarus or the widow's child being raised up from death. Or the healing of the lepers, the blind, or people otherwise afflicted. Or the faith of the Syrophenician woman that her child could be healed if only Jesus would acknowledge her. Or the Samaritan woman at the well whose only task was to draw water but gained new life instead.

All of these are fine examples of what we might want to explain away with reasoning, but in reality they require our belief — a much greater task. Just ask Thomas, who, unlike the rest of the apostles, was not given the opportunity to see Jesus when he first appeared showing them his wounds and acknowledging their disbelief and wonder. Or ask the two apostles in the gospel of Mark who traveled on a road and ate with Jesus before they recognized their teacher. And what about “the disciple whom Jesus loved” who went into the tomb following Peter and saw and believed? Thomas had

been known for so much more, but somehow all anyone remembers him for now is being the one who doubted.

What would people say about you? What do you need to “see” to believe? And do people you encounter know by your actions what you believe?

The gospel reading encourages us to be faithful and believe, to trust. There is a temptation then to say that doubting is bad and belief is good, but I would challenge that perspective. Certainly we encounter doubt every day in our lives. But the presence of trust allows us to process information so that even when we cannot see, we can believe. We seldom have unequivocal proof of anything. So how can we ever be certain?

Doubt and faith are not opposites. The opposite of faith in God is not doubt, but believing in something or someone else. The faith journey is filled with doubt, and maybe doubt needs to be present before belief or faith can be realized. Times of questioning can actually lead to deeper relationship with God and reveal new aspects of understanding what we believe. Periods of questioning open our minds to imagine infinite possibilities with God.

When left on our own, we cannot imagine how God would love us, let alone forgive us. Faced with the grandeur of the universe, we wonder at God’s concern over us as little specks in this diverse creative process. We doubt the usefulness of our gifts in a world where it seems there is so much to do. Our doubt becomes the barrier to the fullness of believing and faithfulness. It becomes the stumbling block rather than the passage to a better understanding of our faith.

But when we allow doubt to be a gift from God that opens us up to deeper levels of understanding and closer relationship to God and all God created, we appreciate that faith and doubt are our companions. They coexist, allowing us to see the many paradoxes of God in Christ: human and divine; with us and transcendent; dead and risen, present in the bread and wine. The Easter experience of resurrection challenges any box we might use to confine the God of infinite possibilities. The gospel uses Thomas to demonstrate that God cannot fit into any box and invites us into the imaginative and creative power of God still loose in the world.

Some 2000 years later, Christians all over the world believe, because we know and experience the realness of the stories of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. It would certainly have been nice to have been there and known Jesus — to see. Today we are given ample opportunities to see the face of God all around us. We only need to believe, and then we will see.

Jesus calls those who do not need to see to believe “blessed.” And then he commissions us by saying, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” He said this to the gathered disciples and then sent them into the world breathing the Holy Spirit upon them.

We are tempted to believe that these readings are about faith and doubt, but we must not forget the rest of the story — the commissioning. Blessed are we who believe without seeing and receive the Holy Spirit. Blessed are we who rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, sharing these gifts with everyone we encounter. Together with the apostles we are captured by God's living presence, imagining the infinite possibilities in creating a world that believes even without seeing.

Our faith in Christ, and his resurrection allows us to live as witnesses to the rich diversity of creation as God continues to be present in all that is around us. We rejoice in receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, applying God's abundant love in ways that bring the fullness of God's glory, in the presence of the Kingdom, here and now, through our actions.

In this season of Easter let us all come together as companions in resurrection, approaching our doubts as an invitation on our faith journey to believe without seeing.