

This reading tells of the new birth Christians have received through baptism which brings them a living hope through Jesus' resurrection and an imperishable inheritance. The letter is addressed to former pagans living in the country we now know as Turkey. They have been experiencing some form of persecution. They are encouraged to regard their trials as a testing, and to think of their faith as more precious than gold, which passes purified and unharmed through fire.

And now the reading from First Peter

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

John 20:19-31

Our Gospel presents two appearances of the risen Lord to his disciples. The first takes place on the very evening of the day of his resurrection. The disciples are gathered in fear, but Jesus brings them peace, gives them their mission, and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. A week later, Thomas, who had been absent when Jesus first appeared and who doubted his resurrection, now knows Jesus by his wounds and worships him as his Lord and God. Future disciples will not have Jesus' physical presence, but they will be blessed in their belief.

Hear now these words from the gospel of John.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Liturgist: This is the gospel message of our Lord and Savior.

All: May the reading and the hearing of Your word inform our minds, comfort our souls, and guide our feet.