

John 20:24-31

April 19th, 2020

“Locked in”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

1st S.A. Easter

Vicar Miguel Gonzalez-Feliciano

Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Locked In]

Christ is Risen!

Undoubtedly, that’s one of the joys of this time of the year. Together, you and I can continue to proclaim that Christ has defeated death. Not for His sake, not for fun, but for you and for me. Christ died so that the people of God would have His grace, mercy, and peace.

However, the first celebrations after Easter were much more muted for the disciples. In our text today, the disciples are hiding out in a locked room for fear of the Jews. There is a real fear, both of going outside, but also of letting anything inside the house. I’m sure at this time, you and I can relate to the feeling.

You might not be “locked in” exactly. You’re still able to go out to the grocery store, Rachel and I can still take Daisy on a walk, and people are still able to pick up food from restaurants or have groceries delivered.

The fear is what is most similar.

Like the disciples, countless people around the world are afraid of letting things in.

Nursing homes have locked out family members.

Funerals are limited to ten people.

Families aren’t visiting each other for Easter.

To help combat the spread of the virus, society has even coined a new phrase, “Social Distancing”, a precautionary measure that should help slow down the spread of the virus. Perhaps though, like me, you can’t help but follow the Governor’s reports. I find myself clicking on almost anything shared on Facebook about the spread of the Virus. The numbers are still rising, and new deaths are constantly being reported. People are afraid, not just of a virus that can get them sick or make them self-quarantine, but the possibility of death. No matter how slim the chances, death is what people are afraid of. Death is what you and I are afraid of.

Just like the disciples were.

So, people decide to lock the doors.

[Doubt]

In our reading though, this locking of the doors comes just after Thomas has heard the bold declaration from his co-workers in Christ, “We have seen the Lord”. And yet, famously, Thomas says, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” This is what causes most people to refer to him as “Doubting Thomas”, but if you’ve spent any time around me discussing Thomas, you know I have a different name for him.

Just imagine though. Thomas, along with the other disciples abandoned Jesus in his hour of need. They literally left him for dead. Not because of doubt, but because they saw a crowd of people armed to the teeth coming in the night to arrest Jesus.

Thomas and the rest didn't have a moment to ponder all the previous teachings of Jesus and decide if they wanted to stand with Jesus or not, they did the first thing that came to mind when it all fell apart.

They ran.

They hid.

Peter denied.

John followed.

Thomas was damned.

Damned because he denied the resurrection. Damned, not because of doubt, but because he flat out refused to believe that Christ was risen. The disciples called out to Thomas, "Christ is Risen!" and Damned Thomas responded, "I will never believe!" Thomas locked out Jesus. He locked him out because he wasn't able to put his hands in the nails marks or put his hand into the side of Jesus. In Thomas' mind, I believe that he thought he had bigger fish to fry. Jesus was as good as dead, and death was coming for them next. How could these other guys make such a claim? Judas had betrayed then, Christ was crucified, and the Jews would certainly find it easy to take care of a few disciples. Death was outside the door, better not take any chances. Lock the doors, lock your heart, and pray that death goes somewhere else for a while.

[Seeing the Lord]

But Death could not hold Jesus. Death could not keep Him in the grave. Neither could the walls of that house or a locked door keep Jesus from seeing His disciples. As Jesus comes into the room and stands among the disciples who are cowering in fear, Jesus says,

“Peace be with you.”

Jesus is not asking, he isn't recommending that the disciples find something peaceful to do, Jesus is bringing the peace to them. Because they can see Him, risen and living. Walking and talking. They've had eight days to think about things, eight days at least to process things and think about the teachings. This peace that Christ is bringing to them is a complete and palpable peace. The words of John ring true, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! The disciples know it to be true, they are not getting what they do deserve, they're getting what they don't deserve. A Messiah. A savior. The same bold truth that is proclaimed by you and me during Easter:

Christ is Risen!

[My Lord and my God!]

So, how can damned Thomas be silent? Christ commands him, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” This should have been Thomas' moment. Finally he would get the proof that he wanted. He could move on and his doubts would be erased. But this is Thomas we're talking about here. Thomas, who in John 11:6 said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” When joining Jesus' journey to Lazarus. The same Thomas who

would go on to spread the Gospel throughout Asia. The disciple who didn't just ask to see Jesus, he wanted to touch each and every wound that was inflicted upon him.

Thomas was not a person for small gestures.

His response is just as grand.

“My Lord and my God!”

Thomas, who woke up damned, ended that day a saved child of God. He believed that not only was this the same Jesus Christ who walked and taught among them. This was Messiah. Jesus is Lord and God. Thomas can finally join the chorus of the disciples,

“Christ is Risen!”

[These Things are Written]

Christ is quick to point out though, Thomas believes because he sees. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. These are the last words of Jesus in this section, but John doesn't stop there. John goes on to write,

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

John wants to be clear. Jesus is God and Lord, of you and of me. It's the whole reason he wrote his Gospel. Jesus isn't the focus because he's some miracle worker. Jesus isn't the central figure of history because he turned water into wine. The resurrection of Christ isn't an incredible history. The resurrection is the lynchpin of all creation. Because this Jesus came out of the grave for you and for me. He is God and Lord of the living, the people of God.

[Locked in]

That promise is bursting through your doors. As sure as Christ came through the locked doors for the disciples, Jesus comes through the locked doors of our houses, our hearts, and He brings the peace that surpasses all human understanding with him. Christ completed the mission the Father promised, and He sent the Holy Spirit to create faith in His people. This Faith that you and I share is a sure guarantee, you and I are locked in.

Locked into the family of God.

Locked into the new creation.

Locked into a world without end.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We're locked in to the Resurrection.

So Be it.

Amen.

As followers of Christ, "Keep loving one another earnestly

And show hospitality to one another without grumbling." AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)
