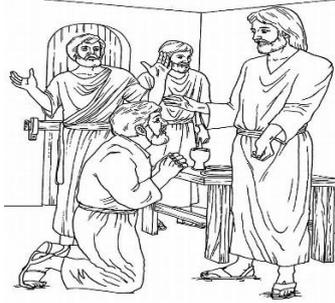


Berrow with Pendock, Eldersfield, Birtsmorton and Hollybush



Second Sunday of Easter

Welcome-do have a glass of juice/wine and cracker/piece of bread ready

HYMN

He has given us new life and hope by raising Jesus from the dead.
Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

OPENING PRAYER

**Faithful one, whose word is life:
come with saving power to free our praise, inspire our prayer
and shape our lives for the kingdom of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

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We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

The God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE COLLECT

Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father. **Amen**

READING: Acts 4.32-35. John 20. 19 to end.
(Please read 1John 1.1-22 at home)

REFLECTION

The disciples of Jesus are huddled together in a room. Thomas happens to be absent. He shows up later, though Jesus had left. "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of those nails, and my hand in his side, I will not believe." The eyewitness reports of the other disciples were not enough. Thomas needed to SEE for himself that the dead Jesus was now the alive Jesus.

You can relate to this urge of Thomas...how we also insist on seeing something with our own eyes before we decide it's real. "Seeing is believing."

But here is a truth with which we must come to terms today. The church of the resurrected Jesus Christ is founded on a complete reversal of this doctrine. Now, it is "believing is seeing," and not the other way around.

Jesus tells Thomas that those who find a way to trust in him without the privilege of seeing him--these ones are blessed. Let's think about this promise of Jesus.

This is quite something for us to hear and absorb in our own lives. What it says is that we are at no disadvantage from those first-century disciples. Believing in this Jesus in our own day and time is its own path for "seeing" him.

This is the joy Peter speaks of in his first letter he writes to a Christian community living long after the time of Jesus walking in Palestine. "Although you have not seen Christ Jesus," Peter tells these followers, "you [nevertheless] love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy."

If you review the lives of the great prophets and saints, from Jeremiah to Mother Teresa, you'll find plenty of doubt. I think most of us have doubts and so we ought to have some sympathy and respect for Thomas.

Certainly, early Christians were doubtful frequently about the wisdom of having adopted this faith. The risks were great, and many of them were tempted to go into hiding for their own self-protection.

In our scientific age we have all been trained to verify through sensory experience, empirical evidence. Thomas actually stands as a pivotal figure in the Christian story precisely because while all the disciples before him *did* get to see and touch and hear Jesus directly, the millions of us who come after Thomas *don't* have that opportunity. The key for Thomas is that he knows the implications of what he has seen. He believes that Jesus is not only alive, but also is God. The other disciples rejoice at seeing Jesus alive, but Thomas is the only one that proclaims, "My Lord and my God!"

Yet notice how Jesus responds to Thomas' demand for proof. He doesn't rebuke him for wanting it. Indeed, Jesus gives him what he needs for faith--he lets him see and touch. But then Jesus goes on to say for the benefit of all of us who will follow Thomas and hear of this story, "Blessed are those who have *not* seen, and yet have come to believe." That line is intended for us, of course, we who cannot see, cannot verify, cannot amass proof, and yet are invited to the blessings of faith in Jesus Christ, nonetheless.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves, what do we need to believe?

Sometimes we'll get lost. Sometimes we'll be strained to stay together, strained by our differences, Sometimes we'll be unwilling or unable to trust what the others are telling us or to credit their insights into the way ahead. But if we can hang together, we can cover some pretty rough terrain, safely and securely.

Actually Thomas has become something of a hero to me because of that. He had the tenacity to seek until he found and the courage to live the rest of life fully trusting in the glory and grace of God which he glimpsed that day.

What could get in the way of God's love for you? Closed doors? Doubts? Demands? Illness, hardships, failings, mistakes? No, I believe nothing can separate you from God's love!

The challenge, then, is just to trust in that and live in light of that, even when we cannot always see it or feel it. Maybe in remembrance of blustering Thomas, we all just ought to widen our standards of proof, to encompass the truth of all the wondrous ways God's love already has, and is, and will come to us...until we can say with joyful conviction: All I have seen teaches me to trust God assurance of eternal, unconquerable love for us!

As Easter Christians, life begins anew and in the power of the resurrection, we stand before an open door. Our lives are filled with joy because we have been assured of an eternal future.

The Christian faith will always face challenges from those who claim it will not stand up to scrutiny. We never assume that life's problems disappear and that the life of a post-resurrection Christian is free of challenge. Faith gives us the strength for the day to face life in creative and courageous ways. Surrounded by darkness, we can walk in the light because we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Please ask for any additional prayers

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour taught us.

**Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done ;
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil;
for thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE PEACE

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples
and said 'Peace be with you'.
Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia!

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you. Alleluia.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures;
he was buried;
he was raised to life on the third day in accordance with the
Scriptures; afterwards he appeared to his followers, and to all the
apostles: this we have received, and this we believe. Amen.**

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THE THANKSGIVING PRAYER

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

By his death he has destroyed death,
 and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life. We
 therefore lift our voices
 to proclaim your glory as we sing our joyful hymn of praise:

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord,
 God of power and might,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 Hosanna, in the highest.
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna, in the highest.**

Here is the table set for a special meal.
 The bread, the wine, prepared and presented.
 Ready to be served and shared.
 We remember Jesus sharing a meal like this with his disciples, his
 friends.
 He included everyone, those he could trust and those he could not trust.
 Today we are his disciples, his friends.
 Each one of us is welcome.

How amazing it is to be loved and wanted even when we have not been
 perfect.
 How wonderful it is to be included as we are.

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE: THE COMMUNION STORY

When Jesus shared the bread with his friends, he explained that he is
 the Bread of Life. Like bread, Jesus nourishes and strengthens us so
 that we can know right and wrong and not be confused.

When we eat the bread together, we are strengthened as a community to remember Jesus and do the things Jesus would do in our world. Jesus also used a cup of the fruit of grapes to teach his disciples. He compared the red wine to blood, to help us remember the suffering in the world.

Drinking the wine together helps us remember that we are all part of a special agreement, a covenant, with God. God loves us so much that when we make mistakes, or when we make bad choices, God has agreed to forgive us and give us a second chance, every time.

This is ordinary bread and ordinary wine.

But when we eat the bread together and drink the wine together, something extraordinary happens which brings us closer to Jesus and to one another. We become the 'Body of Christ.'

Which means that our eyes and ears see and hear what Jesus would see in our world. And our arms and hands do Jesus's work to help others.

SHARING THE BREAD AND WINE

When you take a piece of bread, **please hold it up.**
Then let us all eat together.
The Bread of Life shared with you.
Be strengthened to do what is right.

When you take a cup of juice/wine, **please hold it up.**
The Cup of Forgiveness shared with you.
Remember God's agreement to give each of us another chance to be better people.

(consume)

God of love, we thank you for this Easter celebration and for strengthening us with the Bread of Life. Thank you for forgiving us and giving us another chance to do what is right. We promise to be the living Body of Christ, nourished by this special meal. We promise to use our

arms, hands, feet, eyes and ears to follow Jesus and make the world a better place for everyone.

Amen.

THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
 Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
 we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
 Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
 Lord God, Lamb of God,
 you take away the sin of the world:
 have mercy on us;
 you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
 receive our prayer.
 For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
 you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
 with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
 Amen.**

HYMN

THE BLESSING

God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
 open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

Amen.

God the Son, who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory,
 give you joy as you share the Easter faith.

Amen.

God the Holy Spirit, whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples,
 empower you and fill you with Christ's peace.

Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
 the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
 be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!