



SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, APRIL 27, 2025
ACTS 5:27-32; PSALM 150; REVELATION 1:4-8; JOHN 20:19-31

STEP BY STEP, WITH DOUBTS IN TOW

John 20:19-31 *[When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.]*

I read a lovely little essay this past week by a fellow pastor who shared the experience of being seated beside a young couple on

his flight from the U.S. to London. The pastor was in the aisle seat, the woman in the middle, and her husband in the

window where he had a small book out, singing softly while his wife rested her head on his shoulder. She drifted off to sleep for the long-haul flight. After a time, the husband closed his book and sat quietly.¹

The pastor recounted the exchange with the husband that ensued:

[My curiosity finally got the better of me, and I asked him if he wouldn't mind telling me what he had been singing. He turned his body toward me and laid a hand on the book in his lap. "It is the custom of my people to read the four gospels in the Bible aloud during the season of Lent. [My wife and I] sing the words to each other at the end of the day, and this was the first opportunity we've had since we began our journey earlier. I hope I did not disturb you."

"Not at all," I assured him. "What a meaningful practice."

"You are a Christian?" he asked.

And then—in the way we used to do while spending multiple hours in close proximity as planes winged us to our destinations—we quietly spoke. Beginning as usual with where we were

going and why, where we were coming from (me, Texas, but England originally; he, Kerala in India), we moved on to speak of our shared faith, our families, our communities. At some point I realized we hadn't introduced ourselves.

"My name's Sean, by the way."

"And I'm Thomas. It's good to meet you, brother."

And then I said something that still causes me to wince whenever I recall [the] conversation.

"And how long have your people been Christians?"

Much to his credit, he didn't respond in any of the ways he could have... After all, the crass assumption that lay beneath my question was that people from my homeland must have gone as missionaries to his homeland. There were all manner of sarcastic or offended responses my traveling companion could have made...

His response was simply to smile and say, "My name is Thomas."

I looked at him blankly, not understanding, thinking he had perhaps misheard me. "My name is Thomas," he

repeated. “My people have been Christians for about 2,000 years.”]

Tradition holds that Thomas, one of the twelve apostles who followed Jesus, walked all the way to southern India, bringing Good News to the people there. The Mar Thoma Church thrives today, and their Diaspora includes many siblings in Christ here in Seattle, even some who are members here at Saint Mark’s.

Their genogram of faith is as legitimately apostolic as any part of the global catholic church, ours included, and the pastor’s story serves as gentle reminder for how colonial impulses and blind spots can still generate micro-aggressions.

But that’s not the chief reason I share the story today. I share the story, here on the Second Sunday of Easter, when we hear the story of St. Thomas once again, because he is often disparaged as “Doubting Thomas.” He is not a central figure in the gospels; he speaks only three times, but each time comes at a critical juncture in the gospel story, so he has something to teach us.

Thomas is willing to risk his own life to walk with Jesus toward the cross.

Thomas is earnest in his prayerful discourse with Jesus, asking “Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?” To which Jesus famously answers, “I am the Way, the truth and the life.”

And then, in the upper room after the resurrection, when Jesus returns and offers Thomas his wounds as proof that it is he, Thomas falls to the ground and makes what is arguably the clearest confession of Christ we have in all the gospels: “My Lord and my God!”

Courage to follow Jesus; earnestly vulnerable in life and prayer; orienting to Christ in one’s way of being. This is the threefold pattern of discipleship that Thomas shows us from the margins of the story. Indeed, this is the threefold pattern of Christian life, whether you’re from a small village in India, a new convert in a city on the west coast, or wherever you are on your spiritual journey.ⁱⁱ Courage to follow faithfully even when the going gets rough; a vulnerable life of prayer; and conversion of life that arises from one’s commitment to Christ. This is the pattern.

Thomas, doubts in tow, makes his way step by step through a lifetime of faithful journeys that Jesus sees fit to bless. The pattern is there for us, too. We don't have to have it all figured out; we don't have to know the way with certainty; we don't even have to believe in dogmatic ways. We just have to show up, or invite Christ to show up for us, and receive the words of blessing and peace he has to offer us, doubts in tow.

I've always wondered whether Thomas actually puts his fingers in the wounds of Jesus. The story doesn't say he does. I think it is an intentional omission, since we who listen to the story today are invited to follow without fleshy proof either.

What we do know is that John's gospel finds Thomas' conversion of life sufficiently powerful to end the story there. With this confession from Thomas, the book is closed, and those listening to the story can exhale a peaceful sigh.

Thomas' path is not all clean and neat. It is a messy struggle at times; it is at times even perhaps misguided, but isn't that much more true a trajectory we take as we strive to follow Jesus? Step by step, doubts in tow.

Thanks be to God for the witness of Thomas. And thanks be to God for the Risen Christ—the one who comes to us and says, “Peace” and the one before whom we can fall on our knees and confess, “My Lord and my God!”

ⁱ Essay by Sean Gladding, [The Christian Century](#), accessed online, April 23, 2025.

ⁱⁱ The Benedictine vows follow this same threefold pattern: Obedience (to listen), Stability (remain in community), and *conversio mori* (conversion of life).