

A New World from a Locked Room

King of Glory Lutheran
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry
April 11, 2021
Easter 2: John 20:19-31

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." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So 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."

²⁶A 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." ²⁷Then 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." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Jesus' resurrection ushers in a new world which the disciples can hardly imagine just yet. Can we see it? Will we participate?!

God's grace and peace to you this day...how? Because Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

Before we get too far, here's a quick reminder that the Easter sermon last week was from Mark's account. Today we've moved back into the Gospel of John. So in John's account it was evening of the day Mary had seen Jesus in the garden. She didn't recognize him until He said her name. Jesus sends her to tell the disciples of His resurrection.

A new world has just been birthed right underneath their noses. For God, the resurrection was just as important as Jesus' birth. This new world is more brilliant than God's original creation. Why? How?

Because resurrection speaks to a world of persistent forgiveness of sin. This is a world of divine interaction and intervention to heal and to hold. It is a world of reconciliation for persecuted communities. There is revelation and restoration! There is God showing up in the middle of despair.

But the disciples didn't know that. Our huddled band of Jesus' disciples, are hiding in a locked room, much like Adam and Eve hiding behind their clothing of leaves. They have knowledge but no understanding. There is an empty tomb, but it means nothing.

Sometimes we humans need a good knock on the head, bless their hearts! It's only been a few hours since Mary made her proclamation that she had seen Jesus and he was alive! Yet in that day and age, what is a woman's story? No better than a common crook. An unproven rumor hasn't changed the disciples' behavior. They found it hard to trust the promises Jesus had been telling them for weeks. He would not stay dead. He would return to them. But their hopes are dashed. Fear still ruled the day. In those hours between Jesus' rising and now, nothing had changed.

The cross hadn't changed their ideas, their obedience to the Lord, or their understanding of Jesus' role as Messiah. Nothing had changed at all. For any of them. The community was locked up in fear when an open tomb had just re-routed the course of history.

Fear does this we know! Good news doesn't always help fear to depart, but fear cannot negate Good News! Even if they were cynical or scared, it didn't change the fact of Jesus' rising.

Until, Jesus showed up. They say 90% of ministry is showing up. Well Jesus did just that! He breathed on them the Holy Spirit and gave them peace. He forgave them, Thomas too, for their fear and doubt. He commissioned them to go continue His ministry by forgiving others. Resurrection was a new world!

Yes! Resurrection was a game changer. It was a whole New World full of redemption and new beginnings. Resurrection in God's plan is like Gonzaga winning the game at the buzzer. It's like the first recorded double Salchow in skating in 1936. Yes! Yet, resurrection is larger than this!

Resurrection represents the unity achieved at Olympic games when peoples of all nations come together under one purpose. Resurrection suggests the ability to truly reach across the aisle and work for a common good so that all people have a roof over their heads. Resurrection can even be seen as God's great love continuing creation after a long cold winter.

Yes! I believe on this second Sunday of Easter, resurrection is larger than a single doubting Thomas or a huddled band of men and women avoiding the infighting of their fellow Jews. God took the worst thing in this creation, the innocent crucifixion of a man and redeemed that event into the most glorious of all creation: a new salvation.

So in the evening hours of that first day of the week, God showed up! Jesus came through the doors. So Resurrection suggests that God comes through in times of alarm and disaster! As Thomas gazes at Jesus' hands, the Resurrected One offers forgiveness. That forgiveness extends when we cannot forgive ourselves or the world won't forgive us. Easter is like the man

released from prison this week after spending 15 years for a crime he didn't commit. It's a new world!

Jesus' rising stands for the goodness of humankind to rally around 10 people murdered at King Soopers. But it's more than flowers stuck in a fence and poster board good wishes. It is getting the mortgage paid of the police officer with seven children. Resurrection forgiveness includes praying for the shooter and believing he is no worse a sinner than doubting Thomas. It is a new world.

An empty tomb expresses hope for all the unaccompanied children who don't have parents anymore. There is a God who is father and mother of all. This, brothers and sisters in Christ is what resurrection accomplishes.

Resurrection ushers in a new world that is bigger than you and me! It calls us to radical love, radical obedience, radical discipleship. Because we have to? No! Because Jesus sends us to continue the ministry of reconciliation just as He sent the disciples. The world cannot live without resurrection.

For those early disciples, as we'll hear in the weeks to come...they did carry on. So what is Jesus calling our church to do? What is God asking this community to accomplish? How about you and I as individuals? What do we need to restore and release?

Is it time to re-commit to our LGBTQIA siblings and make certain they know they are welcome whenever they walk through the doors of our church?

Is it time to address our invisible racism in a visible way?

Is it time to help teach a child to read so they can find new life?

Is it time to listen to the witness of someone we might not trust?

Is it time to intentionally place ourselves before God each and every day so we know that grace and mercy deep inside?

Is it time in the midst of sadness at multiple deaths here at King of Glory to shake a fist and say, "We will not be overcome with grief! We are resurrection people who are in God's business of believing what Jesus told us! We are part of God's redemption in this world. We will keep loving no matter the odds."

This new world is what an empty tomb accomplishes. Salvation, forgiveness and love in radical ways. We cannot do anything from a locked room.

This is who we are King of Glory. This is who our resurrected God is. It is still Easter! Alleluia! Amen.