

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



April 16, 2023

## BELIEF

*seeing or feeling is believing?*

by Drew Downs

In one resurrection story, Jesus shows up in a locked room where *most* of the disciples are hanging out. He shows off how alive he really is. And then takes off.

I think that our instincts are to tell this story as being about Thomas' doubt. Which, I think, ranks as *maybe* fourth most important part of the story. Maybe. On a good day. Even as the disciples have locked themselves away *out of fear...*and Thomas *isn't there!* Think about it.

also think the fact that we read Thomas *completely wrong* is why we get belief wrong.

The disciples get to see and feel Jesus. That doesn't lead them to believe anything. That's research data. What they *believe* is that God raised him from the dead *and* that this means that God does that. So those many generations who weren't there and can't witness the event might come to believe the same thing, making proof unnecessary.

# EASTER

2023

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### After Holy Week

Last week, I talked about "Easter Tired". That part of Easter we don't often talk about that is exhausting. Not *just* because we've done a lot in the last week. But the simple fact of making this special day is, for a lot of people, really tiring. Parents, caregivers, bakers, artists... all of the work to arrive at church like the empty tomb can feel like a lot.

There is also something like a Lenten hangover for many. We have spent the great forty days in daily reflection, self-examination, self-discipline and denial. We have kept daily devotions, read books and the Bible, and made a real effort to reflect on our life, faith, and hopes.

And now... um... what exactly do we do now? We ate the chocolate and said *he alleluias!* We've found eggs and eaten well. What are we supposed to do now?

For one, we are in the midst of a fifty-day season of Easter. So, I guess, keep it up.

But this feeling right *after* Holy Week, when we're *supposed to be celebrating*, becomes something more like *normal*. In a way, we say to ourselves, *I'm done with my fast, therefore I can break the fast*. But normal time comes after Pentecost. This isn't "back to normal". It is still Easter.

So we should be asking ourselves: *What did I learn about myself (or God/faith/life/etc.) in Lent? And how can I live a life of celebration now?*

With love,  
Drew

# EASTER

2023

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Second Sunday of Easter*

April 16, 2023

### **Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

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

# EASTER

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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.

## Reflection

Christ is risen! These are the words we happily proclaim on Easter. Christ is risen! Alleluia. These are words that transform our *hope* into *joy*.

This week, we have a gospel about joy, connection, and return. The return of Jesus to confirm the belief and offer *new hope* for the world.

Of course, that work gets sidetracked easily. The author points out one of them wasn't there, and when he hears about it, he wants the experience too. So, the following week, when Thomas makes sure to be there, Jesus shows up again and, despite his earlier claims, doesn't need the physical proof. He sees.

There is little wonder, of course, that Christians would obsess about about this diversion, dubbing the disciple "doubting Thomas" for it. Turning a gospel story of joy into one of ridicule as a cautionary tale. It is a prominent part of the telling.

However, it is also telling how often we allow the details to derail us or how frequently we miss the glorious revelation in the gospel for the bits that unsettle.

Jesus returned to his disciples. Showed them grace. Revealed the glory of God. Was generous with Thomas. And in the end, Called *everyone* who comes after them "blessed."

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