

Second Sunday of Easter
April 12, 2026
John 20:19-31

Hopefully, the younger generation appreciated the attached, in comic form, the story of Jesus and the Resurrection. One was long and the other a shorter version of last weeks Easter Story.

In his book *Wishful Thinking*, Frederick Buechner says, “Whether your faith is that there is a God or that there is not a God, if you don’t have any doubts, you are either kidding yourself or asleep. Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving.”

According to his famous moniker, Doubting Thomas must have had a faith that kept him antsy, awake and moving. However, there is one major problem. Nowhere in this story is Thomas said to be “doubting.” The only two occurrences in the New Testament of the verb meaning to doubt (*distazō*) are found in Matthew. When Peter was afraid, began to sink in the water, and cried out for Jesus to save him, Jesus reached out, caught him, and said, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31). Most interesting in relation to John’s story is the Great Commission in Matthew 28, where we are told “when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted” (Matthew 28:17).

Instead of talking to Thomas about doubt, Jesus speaks in terms of belief/unbelief, an important theme throughout John’s Gospel. Immediately after Thomas’s confession of faith in John 20:28 (“My Lord and my God!”) and Jesus’s expansion on that realization in John 20:29 (“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe”), John reveals the purpose of his Gospel.

Decades after Jesus’s death and resurrection, John wrote to a church that had not seen Jesus in the flesh nor put their fingers and hands in his wounds. John wrote his Gospel “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” (John 20:31).

John 20:19-31 describes a **commissioning** scene. The risen Jesus appeared to ten of his disciples, greeted them with peace (not once, but twice), showed them his hands and side, and sent them out just as the Father had sent him, breathing the Holy Spirit on them as a blessing. It’s important to note that Jesus chose to commission a group of disciples who were previously hiding in fear behind locked doors. Just as in Matthew’s commissioning story, Jesus sends out all eleven, even those who doubted (Matthew 28:19-20).

Consider these interesting parallels between John 20:19-31 and your congregation on this Second Sunday of Easter. The ten met the risen Lord on Easter night and again a week later. We celebrated Easter a week ago and have come to worship again. But one week later, how many of us are still thinking about Easter? How have our actions proclaimed any kind of Easter message? Did we leave the good news of Jesus’ resurrection at the sanctuary doors on Easter Sunday?

Speaking of doors, are we gathered together as a community of faith behind doors in fear, much like those disciples? **Are we** afraid of what the world might think of us if we are bold enough to let others know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead? **Do we** want tangible proof of the resurrection before we will fully commit ourselves to a life of discipleship? Underneath those questions lies a more basic question: As we gather one week later, **do we really expect** to meet the risen Christ in the midst of our worship and in the world outside of the church walls?

The desperate father of a son bedeviled by a spirit cried out to Jesus, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24). The man’s plea echoes Jesus’s command to Thomas in John 20:28, “Don’t be unbelieving but believe.” (Note that the New Revised Standard Version reads, “Do not doubt but believe,” but the Greek speaks of unbelief/belief.) Thomas

emphatically declared, “Unless I see, I will not believe.” One week later, Thomas confessed, “My Lord and **my God**,” in essence, “I believe.” He is the first to refer to Jesus the Christ as God.

Much more than one week later, some 2,000 years after that first Sunday after Easter, we are called to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, without being able to see his nail-wounds or his pierced side. Like Thomas, we may struggle with unbelief. Like the disciples, we may hide behind the doors out of fear. But, like Thomas and the other ten disciples, we are called to witness to the risen Lord and to carry on his work in today’s world, so that others may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing may have life in his name.

Questions for reflection on John 20:19-31

1. How can this Easter story encourage the people in the pews who, in so many words, may say, “I believe; help my unbelief”?
2. How does the promise of the Easter message of the risen and living Lord strengthen and enable your congregation for ministry in Jesus’s name?
3. What fears keep your congregation behind doors closed to the community and world beyond?
4. Why did the Resurrected Lord still have the wounds?