

Peace

John 20:19-31

April 12, 2026

Rev. David Lewicki, preaching

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jewish authorities, 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.”

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Evening on resurrection day. The world had changed before dawn. But the impact of that change doesn't come to everyone, everywhere, all at once. It takes to unfold.

If you recall, Peter and the Beloved Disciple had seen the empty tomb and run home afraid. Mary stayed at the tomb, and met Christ, and she told her friends “I have seen the Lord.”

Even so, they are still *hiding behind locked doors*. These locked doors are literal and a metaphor. These disciples *are* justifiably afraid for their lives. The people who crucified Jesus might come for them next. Who wouldn't lock the doors? We all have our own reasons for living in fear, for locking our doors. Someone out there might want what I have. Click. There are bad people out there. Click. I don't want anyone to bother me. Click. We all lock our doors, close ourselves off from whatever frightens us “out there.”

This metaphor of locked doors is deep. Our fears get to the heart of how we experience the world. When Beth and I were doing premarital counseling, the priest, Rev. Becca Stevens, asked us “what are you afraid of?” I didn't know what she meant. Like that the chicken at the reception would be undercooked? “No,” she said, “we think we're motivated by what we love. But our daily decisions are often motivated more by what we're afraid of.” Your fears lead you to put iron bars and security systems around your home. But also, more profoundly, around your hearts—you close them up out of fear. Your fears constrain what you think it possible for ourselves and the world. We think our fears justify these fortresses we've built. When you live behind locked doors, you can't see that your fortress is a prison.

So on Easter eve, Christ liberates us from these prisons of fear. Christ appears behind our locked doors speaking “peace.” Peace. Life in God’s kin-dom is here, now, and this life is peace. Come into the peace of Christ.

To encourage them to come out, Jesus shows these fearful people his hands and his side—the places where his body had been punctured by the forces of evil. It’s a way of saying, “I know you are afraid of the harm that might come to you. But nothing there is nothing they can do to you, nothing they can take from you that can ever truly harm you.” “Perfect love casts out fear.”

Then he does something weird. Jesus breathes on them. We’re so self-conscious about our breath, the idea that Jesus gets close enough to you to breathe on you feels awkward—if foot washing hasn’t weirded you out already, Christ goes the extra mile here. But know this: when Christ breathes on the disciples, the same Spirit that was with and in Jesus is in you! The Holy Spirit, the Spirit that is the fluid, dynamic life of God—this is your Spirit! This act of breathing upon isn’t new—we’ve seen this before—it’s God breathing into the dirt of Creation in Genesis 2 to make human beings and it’s resurrecting breath of the Spirit that blows through the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel. The Spirit that was in Jesus is in you!

Get out from behind your locked doors! You have not been given this Spirit to sit there. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you!” “I send you,” Jesus declares. To receive strangers with gracious hospitality. I send you to share your bread with the hungry. I send you to comfort the grieving. I send you to speak truth to power. I send you to build communities of love and justice, relationship by relationship. The Breath of God, the Breath of the Spirit, is in you! This is Resurrection, Pentecost, and the Great Commission all in one—God is pouring out the Spirit on all flesh, sending of Christ’s people into the world to love it into wholeness.

Do you feel it? Do you feel it yourself? Do you feel this Spirit in you today?

Some of you do. Some will leave this place knowing, “the same Spirit that was in Jesus is in me. I can love the world into wholeness.” And some of you will say, “I don’t feel nothin’.” If that’s you, it’s OK. Thomas doesn’t get it either. He misses it all. We don’t know where he’s gone. He’s out getting ice cream, some fresh air. He misses this whole conveyance of the Spirit in the Resurrected Christ. Then he says I don’t buy it unless I see Christ myself.

Good for Thomas. He’s proof that doubt is not the opposite of faith. Doubt is part of the movement of faith in every human life. We can experience cycles of doubt and faith dozens of times in our lives. Even dozens of times a day.

God doesn’t need a bunch of mindless followers. God doesn’t need “yes men” and “yes women” who drop in line and march in precision. Every follower of Jesus must wrestle with

the implausibility of resurrection like Jacob wrestling with the angel until dawn. God expects you to do your own wrestling.

“I need to see to believe.” Thomas gets what he asks for. He gets a face-to-face encounter with the Risen Christ. Christ comes back just for Thomas. Maybe for you, too. Thomas sees and proclaims, “my Lord and my God.” Thomas, the doubting one, is the one who speaks the words that finally and fully answer John’s big question: “who is Jesus?” My Lord and my God.

I want to speak to the doubters among us. If you’re 100% certain of the identity of Jesus, you can get up and go to Starbucks and come back in a few minutes. I want to share something with the doubters, which includes myself some days.

Thomas demands proof. He says I wants to put my finger in the wound of Jesus’ side, then I will believe. He does get to see Jesus. But it’s not clear he ever touches him. I used to think it was implied in the story—that Thomas did run his finger gently along Jesus’ wounds. But I’m not sure. The way the story is written, the question remains open. Did Thomas get the “proof” he wanted? All we know is that he says, “My Lord and my God!”

Seeing, touching—evidence, proof—matters. But physical proof doesn’t get you to “my Lord and my God.” We have to demand that our beliefs correspond with our material existence. But Thomas doesn’t cry out because of what he touches. I think he cries out because of what he feels in his own Spirit. He’s feeling his way not with his fingers but with his heart, he’s running the fingers of his heart along the moral fabric of the world itself. He perceives that there is something true about God’s world that can’t always be seen with the eyes or touched with the hands. It is the truth of the resurrected Christ: might never makes right; real power is loving one another face to face; and love crucified, never dies. He feels this truth. That is why he cries, “my Lord and my God!”

There is more to believing than seeing with our eyes, or touching with our fingers.

There is another disciple standing over Thomas’ shoulder here. It’s you. You have been following since the beginning. You head about a Word becoming flesh and living among us. You heard about water becoming wine. About being born of the Spirit. About Living Water spilling outward to endless life. You heard about bread for 5000. About blind eyes being opened. About mercy flowing freely.. About Lazarus rising. You heard about feet being washed and love being poured out. About death being overcome by undefeatable life.

You will not see the Risen Christ. You will hear these stories. And you will have your own breath rising and falling and wonder if the Divine breath is in you. And you feel with the fingers of your heart a love that is woven through all things. You will need to decide, “who is this Jesus, really?” Jesus looks over Thomas’ shoulder at the disciple who has overheard everything. You. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”