

**April 24, 2022**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Easter Year C**  
**Revelation 1: 4-8**  
**Psalm 150**  
**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." 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.*

***In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.***

***"When it was evening on that day..."***

**Our gospel today is literally the next line after the last line of our Easter Day gospel. As you may recall it ended:**

***" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her."***

**Though a week has passed for us, it is still the same day for Jesus' closest friends. And, though Mary Magdalene has come and told them she has seen and spoken with Jesus, the disciples have their doubts and are still hiding in fear behind locked doors.**

**And I think we can understand their doubts; we all have had times when we are so low, so without hope, we need to see for ourselves where the hope is.**

**And then Jesus appears to them, standing right in front of them now, and shows them his wounds. And then Jesus did something quite amazing: he breathed on them and invited them to receive the Holy Spirit.**

***"Breathe on me breath of God..."***

**This familiar story goes on and one disciple, Thomas, was not in the fearful locked room**

with the others, so the others go and tell him, just as Mary Magdalene came and told them, and just like the other disciples, Thomas doubts the report of seeing and speaking with Jesus.

And I think we can understand Thomas' doubts; we all have had times when we are so low, so without hope, we need to see for ourselves where the hope is.

And then a week later, Jesus appears again, and now Thomas is with the others, and Jesus speaks directly to him.

*“Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with life anew....”*

I have pondered all week the Easter Sunday that our two churches shared a week ago. I have felt an affinity with Thomas, with all the disciples, with Mary Magdalene, that until we see for ourselves, we often have doubts.

Honestly, I still can't fully take in what happened last Sunday, but I know that God was in that place, on that hill at the Labyrinth.

As you have likely heard, if you were not able to be there, we had planned and prepared, thinking that, after had had 60-65 folks show up for our beautiful Palm Sunday together at Trinity, maybe we would have as many as 75 at Easter Sunday. We knew of 8 children coming to the egg hunt. And hoped a few more might appear.

As 10am approached more and more people kept walking up the hill to the Labyrinth. The chairs and the benches and the walls filled with folks, adults and children, and I could almost feel the Labyrinth exhaling, creating more space, allowing all to have the space to belong.

As the numbers grew, Connie Horne hurried down to the church and brought what came to be known as “the Costco container of wafers” from the sacristy, realizing I might need more wafers than the 75 on the altar.

And by the time all were seated, all were served, all received, about 150 people attended our joint Easter service, and the cemetery was alive with dozens of children searching for eggs afterwards.

So many who were there shared their experiences with me this week. Some of you spoke of the how you loved sitting in the semi-circles which allowed you to see each other's faces, and to share smiles and the joy of the day throughout the service. Though the day was chilly, many noted that no one grumbled or left; no one was impatient. So many told me they spoke to people they did not know, and enjoyed meeting folks.

I still can't believe it and I saw it! I almost stopped the service at one point to ask, where did you all come from??? Who are you??

I don't understand last Sunday, but I do know in my heart it was a mystical moment and an encouragement to our churches in our journey together as people of God.

And I know that the message from last Sunday is, NOT that we have to keep having big crowds, that numbers are our focus.

No, numbers are not our goal, we are not called to this world's goals, but to follow the gardener who appeared to Mary Magdalene at dawn on Easter morning. To follow and to encourage and to plant and to welcome and to care.

Our churches are called to continue as a ray of hope in our dark world, as I said last Sunday:

*Remember, Mary Magdalene was hoping, at best, to find a lifeless body; she cannot*

*imagine the drenching hope of Jesus standing in front of her, ready to work, to grow the tender shoots, to heal the battered, to protect those flattened by the harsh winds of this world.”*

To continue our call together, our churches, like Thomas, like all of the disciples, we need to receive the Holy Spirit, to receive the breath of God, to sustain and energize us as we are invited to be vessels of the drenching hope of Jesus.

*“Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.”*

*Amen.*