

John 20:19-31^{v vi}

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.

^v **About the Gospel: John 20:19-31**

The first appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples stresses Jesus' fulfillment of the promises that he made in the long farewell address at the Last Supper in chapters 14-17.

Thomas will not accept the Easter proclamation on the word of others but wishes to experience the risen Christ directly. Yet he can still penetrate the meaning behind the marvel and make a full affirmation of Christian faith. He consummates the sequence of titles given to Jesus by giving him the ultimate title, God.

Verses 30-31 serve as a conclusion to the gospel. They evaluate the content of the gospel, inviting all to understand the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and, through belief, to share in a saving relationship with him.

^{vi} **Reflection and Response**

The doors are locked safely and we are secure now. No more rumors of resurrection, no invitations to impossible belief. We've silenced the women with their idle tales. We've managed to smother the faint, ridiculous expectations that stirred within. Tomorrow is Monday. Our puny affairs can roll on as before, quiet and mindless. It may not seem like much, but it sure beats the roller coaster we've ridden lately, screaming to get off.

Then someone steps through the door, and we know the jig is up. So it is true! Guess we'd better buy unlimited rides on the roller coaster and a season's pass to the divine drama. Better get used to a God who meddles with unlikely sorts like us.

One thing remains: the absentee ballot. Everyone knows a Thomas. The guy misses the show, then wants a blow-by-blow replay. He won't swallow the story 'til he can wrap his hands around it. Just the facts please, ma'am.

Ever courteous, Jesus runs through it again, bent on giving Thomas exactly what he needs.

But put this on record: doubt wasn't only Thomas' problem. He blurted the words we'd all been thinking.

It's a funny thing about answered prayer. It delivers us into our own hands. We'd like to discount it, or call it luck, but deep down we know. That breath had stirred us into a powerful partnership with God and each other. No reneging now.

What doors have you locked? What wild, outrageous dreams have you buried? Look out the Spirit is stirring. That's enough to snag the breath in the throat. Even you latecomers get front row seats: Jesus mentioned you especially.

Quietly consider: What doors have I locked? Will I welcome Jesus when he passes through them and invites me to see and touch, to experience his resurrected life?