

Easter 1C

Acts 5: 12-20

Revelation 1:4-18

John 20:19-31

The sermon for the 1st Sunday of Easter is from the Gospel of St John 20:19-31. The sermon is entitled,

**Grace Mercy and Peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Amen.**

With the doors being locked due to the fear of the Jews, it was a tense moment for the disciples, chaos, worry, apprehension, anxiety would not be out of the realm of possibility, after all, Jesus had died upon the Cross, and presumably, as followers of Christ, the threat of facing a similar demise was not out of the question.

Yet in this midst of their fear and trembling, Jesus appeared and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you". Not just any peace but the peace that would flow from the indelible marks of our Lord, his pierced hands and side....yes, this peace, the peace of our Lord as He appeared to his disciples after his resurrection....

And thus through His peace, His death and resurrection Jesus institutes the office of the keys, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone it is withheld".....

What a wonderful moment this was, yet Thomas was absent, and though the others had told him "We have seen the Lord", Thomas was not having it...rather he responded,

“UNLESS I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe”

Thomas sets the conditions with the doubting word Unless.

Rather than trusting as the blessed ones who do not see yet believe, Thomas would be one who would say, I will believe it when I see it....

This is the struggle for Thomas, for he set his own conditions, his own terms, his own me-centered, self-centered condition on when he would believe. And thus His trust was in the doubting word....

UNLESS.

This is the keyword for today.

A word that evokes the doubts of man....

I will believe it when I see it.

A good example would be today, at our 11am Service, Patrick Theodore Milkovich will be baptized in the Triune name of our Lord. And at every baptism, we are reminded of who is at work. Not you, not me, but rather it is God who is working through the power of His Word in the Water, creating faith in this little child.....

And thus... it reminds me of my drive home with Zoey one day as she asked, “When was I baptized”. I responded, when you were a baby, she said to me, I don’t remember it....and I said, that’s right, because it was not about you, but rather it was God working on you, robing you in His righteousness, creating faith in you, forgiving you, gathering you

to be His own..... yet this is the struggle for man....how could this be? Yet this is the power of God's Word, it is beyond our human reason and strength....And for many, doubt settles in....

And so it was for Thomas, stuck in his human nature, stuck in his own conditions, there He would dig his heels in.....as the Word unless continued to be the anchor of his doubt....

And thus we must ask the question, what is your Unless?

For some of you, you may believe in God when things are going as planned, yet when things are going awry, how quickly we doubt and set conditions upon God...saying... "If God was so good why is this happening?

While some of you may say, surely Christ has forgiven me of my sins, but I still don't know, my sins are too heavy, and though I repent, and though I hear the words of Absolution, how quickly we set conditions upon our sin as if the conditions of forgiveness are upon ourselves, rather than the promise of God in Christ Jesus....

In our frail sinful flesh, we desire to set the conditions, after all, God said, do not eat from this tree, yet when tempted by the devil, Adam and Eve fell to the allure of the conditions of the serpent, yes, you will be like god....what a great condition this was? Yet we know, as Adam and Eve doubted the Word, they would flee to the flesh as sin came into the world.

The question for you today is....

What is your UNLESS?

Ultimately, such as it was for Thomas, it is for us, it is the trust in ourselves, in our own human reason and strength, and soon enough rather than wholeheartedly fearing, loving and trusting God above all things, our faith will only trust in God to a certain point and when certain self-centered conditions are not met, doubt comfortably settles in to the frail and sinful flesh.

This is the temptation that we face, Jesus gives us His Word, yet how quickly we flee to our covetous hearts when we desire more than what God has given us, how quickly we flee to our idols as if they will offer us more in the midst of our disbelieving emptiness...and here we are caught up in the UNLESS, this is the plight of the flesh, this is the plight of man....

And thus we repent.

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe"

Its as if Jesus was saying, these are the pierced marks from my crucifixion...my hands and my side.....from my death and to my resurrection.....

And thus Thomas would finally say, "My Lord and my God!".

This is who your Lord is.....

False gods would leave you in despair.

False gods would leave you wanting.

False god would leave you in eternal darkness.

Then there is the Christ.

The Anointed One.

The One true God, set apart to be the Savior for You.

Yes, the marks would tell the story that day, indeed, this is the Lord who died upon the Cross, who was pierced for our transgressions, who withstood the most excruciating pain and humiliation, the most harrowing suffering that only the Son of God endured for your salvation,

Indeed, this is who your Lord is,

For the marks on the hands and on his side would reveal the grace of our Lord and the cost of your forgiveness, yes, the cost that He not only was pierced for your transgressions, but also, that He was raised on the third day, to destroy and conquer the grave for you, to deliver you the victory over sin death and the power of the devil,

And thus Jesus says....

Peace be with You..

Indeed, from the mouth of the empty tomb and to the resurrected Lord, this is peace....

For this Peace is Christ, the victory that He has won for you, as He has forgiven you of all your sins, for there is no UNLESS with Christ, because He is faithful, He delivers on His promise, and He grants you the assurance that by His Word, as the Word, for Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God who died and rose for the forgiveness of all your sins...

And by these marks

By these wounds,

By His death and resurrection, the doubts are laid to rest.

For your trust is not in yourselves, but rather in the authority and power of the Word.

Yes, the temptation is very real that we trust in our doubts that we rely upon the word UNLESS, yet friends, take heart, for this is our Lord and His Word that quells your doubts, and settles your fears, for in Christ you have His Word, and His Word delivers, from His death, to His resurrection, to the font, and to the Supper, here the promise is delivered, here the questions are answered, here God gives you His Word...

for...these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you have life in His Name.

Indeed, the Word, the Word, the Word, this is your strength, this is your peace, this is where all your doubts are answered.....for it is Christ for you.....for the forgiveness of all your sins.

Amen.

The Peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

