

Easter 2
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In the name of the risen, Christ, Amen!

Are you having trouble keeping track of what day it is?

If so, you're in good company.

I can't tell you how many people I talk to during these days of quarantine who've lost all sense of time.

So I'm happy to share a tip for how to tell that it really is the Sunday after Easter:

We just heard from John's Gospel the story we call "Doubting Thomas".

We hear it every year right after Easter.

In a more "normal" year,

it comes after the crowds and excitement are over.

But this year, well, there weren't any crowds and not much excitement.

But it's always a timely story to hear.

A lot of us relate to Thomas, the disciple bold enough to express his doubts and questions right outloud.

Reading about Thomas gives us a chance to talk about how admitting our doubts can lead us to a deeper faith, and asking our questions can lead to, well, if not answers at least better questions.

And of course I'd be remiss not to point out that it's Thomas who ends up making the strongest declaration of faith of anyone in the gospel.

"My Lord and my God!" Thomas says, at last, to Jesus.

So it's a familiar story, one you may have heard me preach before.

And yet reading it *this* year,

preparing to preach from *this* place (my dining room!),

a detail I'd always known was there suddenly feels more compelling to me.

They were locked away, afraid, in a house.

Locked away, afraid, at home.

One difference from many of us is that the disciples at least were all together.

Well, *almost* all together.

Thomas was not there with them.

(Was he the one sent out to the grocery store, wearing a face mask?)

For whatever reason, he wasn't there when the other disciples were visited by Jesus.

Thomas must've felt some distance from the others

Thomas wanted to see and experience the risen Christ for himself.

Now we know that Jesus does come to Thomas where he is.

John says it was the next week – the week after Easter.

But to Thomas, it must've felt like forever.

Day after day dragging on, blending together,

not knowing how it would end;

not knowing if Jesus would find him inside that house, afraid.

But Jesus did find him.

Jesus met Thomas where he was – afraid, locked inside a house.

Jesus came to Thomas, alone, who had not yet seen him.

Jesus came to Thomas with his scars and vulnerability,
and by Jesus' wounds Thomas was healed.

By his wounds we are healed.

That's a line I love from Eucharistic Prayer C, which I swear one day we'll share together from our real (not virtual) altar.

While that's one of the newer prayers in the Prayer Book,

it's from an ancient passage from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, chapter 53 vs. 5.

That's getting near the end of Isaiah,

sometimes called 2nd Isaiah because it was likely written

near the end of the Babylonian Exile –

a time of disruption and disorientation,

when the people Israel scarcely recognized their own lives any more.

The prophet Isaiah offers a series of poems about a suffering servant.

Many Christians are quick to associate this figure with Jesus.

But in Isaiah's context, it might have been intended as the people themselves, afraid, but *not* at home.

Exiles, people who need reminded that God's love –
God's healing love -- could find them wherever they are.

God's healing love made known in Jesus comes to us where we are too.
Maybe we're beginning to feel like exiles in our own homes.
Maybe you're terrified or tearful –
or maybe you need a good cry but haven't managed one yet.
Maybe you're worried sick.
Or bored stiff.
Maybe you feel like you're dealing with things pretty well most days.
Or maybe you're secretly enjoying something about this situation,
but feel guilty admitting it in the midst of so much suffering.
Or maybe you don't know how you're doing anymore.

Jesus can meet you right there.
Jesus can find you there, locked, maybe afraid, in your home.
Can you find Jesus there?

Look for him. Ask for him. Question him.
Go ahead, doubt him when you need to.
Jesus is not above being vulnerable,
to be right there with you in the mess of your life, your home.
He'll meet you right where you are, even now.
And by his wounds you will be healed.

Like so many before us, by his wounds we are healed.

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