

2 Easter 2012
I John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

Lead us, Holy One,
outside the locked doors of our fears
away from unbelief
into the the joy of our risen Lord.
May we never again live
as if you were dead. Amen.

The movement on this Sunday, often called “Doubting Thomas Sunday” does not begin with doubt. The Greek word in this Johannine text is unbelief; a long step away from doubt. It’s Thomas’ lack of belief, which mirrors that of the other disciples, Jesus calls to task. It’s tough when Thomas is the only one not with the others; he wants what they have seen, what they have experienced. So Jesus’ response to Thomas is not one of scolding, or reprimand, but one of affirmation. And Thomas receives what he asks; his heart and mind are open to believing. But it’s not just for Thomas that this scenario has been offered. It’s for the future generations, of which the gospel writer is one, that the move from unbelief to belief is presented in order to supply the faith they too will need. The fear that surrounded that first day of resurrection has not been supplanted by joy, not yet. The disciples are petrified that they too will be dragged away and hung out for all to see and jeer. But when Jesus does appear, and the fearful ones are finally convinced it is really him and not some apparition, they are ready to move from their own unbelief into faith. That movement is how they now receive the spirit of Jesus into their very beings in order to go forward. For the celebration of resurrection is also a celebration of mission. Death to resurrection requires movement to pronounce, to explode with absolute and utter bliss. This one is real, he is alive, and the time to tell the world is coming soon. The time for the disciples to go into their own mission mode will be to bear witness to the identity of God as revealed in Jesus.

And Thomas will join them in that witness. For he, like us, must see, must know by faith. And it is only through faith that the crucified Jesus, now resurrected, now proclaimed the Christ, will be made present. For it is not just Thomas, it’s the ekklesia the church, has now seen, has now touched.

Jesus gives to Thomas what he gives to us. The generous gift of himself. When Jesus is recognized for who he is, then he can be received. Then his spirit which is breathed so freely is given with a loss of fear. None need fear again no matter the circumstances. Each of the original twelve died; Judas by hanging and the other eleven by torture. And those who died at the hands of others did not fear. They were spirit filled and spirit led. Which is why this section of the gospel of John was written. For the turn of the first century was one of horrific fear for Christians as they tried to live their faith in a hate-filled world. Action without belief is directionless; belief without action is deadly. The two must be braided together. So for them, so for us. We too must continue to believe, to live into the resurrection with God’s limitless love, to love one another the same. But we also much be filled with both spirit and action. It’s too easy to sit in a pew and make a statement of faith. It’s harder, but so needed, to take our small faith out into that same hate-filled world, that unbelieving world, and make a

statement about faith, about love, about Jesus' gift of self, about God's limitless breath.
Amen.