

Easter I

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Preacher: Seminarian Ian Jarrells

[0 : 0 0] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Please be seated.

Last week we celebrated the resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of our faith. As the Apostle Paul mentions in one of his epistles, If the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins. But we do not have to fear, because Christ has risen from the grave, and now we can truly celebrate.

The fast is broken, and the feasting has begun. Enjoy the feast during this Easter season. We can do nothing else but celebrate the resurrection of God.

The resurrection and the defeat of sin is the reality, but our own experience seems to tell a different story. We know about the resurrection.

[1 : 1 0] All of the churches that the apostles formed and nurtured, they knew about the resurrection. But the problem of sin still persisted. Even though evil and death were defeated, and sin tasted of the flesh of Christ and became anemic, sin's power still seems to hold its grip on our lives.

We are not always loving, not always good, not always merciful, not always kind, not always generous, and most certainly not always forgiving. A life of holiness is much harder than it is portrayed.

We read about the apostles in the book of Acts, about how they were courageous for the sake of the gospel. They did not mince words. They spoke the truth when they needed to.

They crossed ethnic boundaries to show the love of God, that it was for all people, and they had a robust relationship with the Lord. And when we read these accounts, there are two responses that we give, and they are basically simultaneous.

We are both amazed by their faith, but also ashamed at our inability to follow after their example of Christlikeness. It might be easy to believe that Jesus has risen from the grave, but it can be hard to believe in the full ramifications of his resurrection.

[2 : 3 1] It can be hard to believe that we are truly forgiven by God. Thomas provides the example for the way that many of us feel. He wasn't there when Christ appeared to the disciples the first time, and he made it clear to the other disciples that he wasn't just going to put blind faith in the matter.

Unless I see his hands, the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Not only was he not going to believe that Christ had risen from the grave unless he had proof, he also wasn't going to believe that his sins had been forgiven unless he saw the risen Lord.

He had spent the last several years following who he believed to be the Messiah, the one who was going to restore Israel to its former glory, and the one who was going to bring forgiveness of sins in its ultimate sense.

But those hopes were crushed when Jesus was crucified, when he was killed on the cross. But when Jesus appeared to him in the flesh, his whole perspective changed.

[3 : 3 9] He was able to place his faith in the one who he hoped was who he said he was. In Thomas' cry, my Lord and my God, Thomas was able to see the risen Lord for who he was, the promised Messiah who takes away the sins of the whole world.

But the final words that Jesus says to Thomas, they're for us. Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Who knows if those words made sense to the disciples at that time. Jesus' teachings often didn't make sense to the disciples until later on in their lives. But it is in those words that we can find hope. We haven't seen the risen Lord with the holes in his hands and his side, yet we are blessed because we believe even though we haven't seen. And we may ask, well, how can we believe if we haven't seen?

Thomas may be an example for us, but how is it that we can be like him? After all, he has seen the risen Lord and we have not. And while you may be right, that is not entirely the truth.

[4 : 53] We have seen Christ. We see him in his church. We see him in the ministry that he gave to the apostles when he breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. We see him in the suffering of the church today.

We see him in our priests and in our bishop. And we see him in our sacraments. And we see him chiefly in the Eucharist. The body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Son of God.

So when we wonder whether or not we are forgiven, let us run to the church. Let us remember our baptism, how our Lord cleanses us from all impurity.

Let us run to confession and hear that we have truly been forgiven of our sins. Let us gaze upon the Eucharist and see our bodies become one with Jesus Christ.

Let us see all of these symbols become reality within us. Because that's what those symbols do. They make real what we see, hear, taste, and touch.

[5 : 52] Let us, like Thomas, take hold of the sacraments of the church and say, My Lord and my God, thank you for forgiving me of my sin. Let us believe the resurrection and know that the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.