

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

11th April 2021 - Easter 2

Collect:

Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred: open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace, to the praise of God the Father.

Amen.

Psalm 133

- 1 How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!
- 2 It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.
- 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.



A reading from the book of Acts (4.32-35)

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (20.19-end)

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.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection: Every year, the first Sunday after Easter, we have this Gospel reading, and so every year we hear about our saint, St Thomas. And we are reminded that, because of this scene, rather unjustly, I think, the church has labelled him Doubting Thomas. So I think we here at St Thomas' should call him Believing Thomas.

We don't know why he was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them when they were gathered in the house with the doors locked that first Easter night. We don't know whether his grief was so much that he simply couldn't face anyone, no one could comfort him. Or whether his down to earth directness had got the better of him and he decided he had just had enough and it was time to get back to his old life. Except he can't have been far away, because later that evening, or maybe the next day – we aren't told – he was back with the other disciples.

Maybe he had let something get in the way, in his bewilderment and shock, let something distract him, and in which case he was simply late arriving. And so he was doubly frustrated when the disciples said "We have seen the Lord!" – frustrated with them, and frustrated with himself for being late, for letting something get in the way that prevented him having the most extraordinary experience of his life. Imagine how he felt. Whatever had kept him, had separated him from the others, he was not prepared to join in their rejoicing until he had proof. He needed evidence. Why did he not believe the disciples whom he had spent the last three years with, travelling with, living with, eating with, sharing pretty much every moment and every experience with. Why now did he not believe them?

What was unconvincing about them? He surely trusted them, at least for the most part, at least, most of them, at least most of the time. He knew their foibles and quirks, and he would know who was going to pull a fast one. And surely this was not something they would try and wind him up about. You don't joke about people coming back from the dead. So what was so unconvincing? I don't think it was that they were unconvincing, or that Thomas had reason to doubt them – it was that what they were claiming was so immense that he simply couldn't see how it could be true. It was breaking through all his assumptions about what was possible, indeed about what made life go round.

And I think of us then, and our efforts, our very real efforts, to share what we believe with our neighbours, our friends, our families. They know us, know us well, know our foibles and quirks, and know that we are basically trustworthy souls. And they know that our faith is at the heart of us, and not something we come and go about. So why do they not believe us? I know it can be very hard for us that family, friends or neighbours who see us live our faith, see us believing, do not take that step to share it with us. And that is when I think again of Thomas – who had all the advantages of having been with Jesus for those years, and still did not believe what his friends said. It is a world-shattering step, a world-shattering act to believe, that breaks open all the assumptions that have shaped our lives. "These things do not happen, God cannot be true in the ways you say God is – that is just impossible". So we find ourselves firm in our belief and they firm in their unbelief – or rather, their different belief.

So what happens for Thomas? Nothing it seems that his fellow disciples say or do for a week makes any difference. He does not change his mind, or his heart. And so a week later they are together, and this time he isn't late. And Jesus appears among them. And Jesus speaks to them, and then directly to Thomas. Put your finger here, your hand here. But Thomas doesn't need to. He doesn't need to touch anymore. He has seen and heard, and his response is the most extraordinary declaration of faith, far stronger, far more dramatic, more immense than any that his fellow disciples had uttered: "My Lord and my God." He sees what the other disciples had yet to see, that Jesus risen from the dead is indeed truly God. That is why I think we should call him Believing Thomas.

And for us, and for our friends and family and neighbours? What happens here that we need to remember? We need to remember what actually makes a difference for Thomas. He may have got back together with his fellow disciples, but that hasn't changed his mind. What makes a difference is Jesus himself, Jesus' own actions towards Thomas. Whether our family, friends or neighbours come to faith, come to share our belief, is about Jesus' action in their lives and them seeing that. We can't make that happen. We can't force it or pester them about it. We can be in our loving relationships with them, and pray that they will know Jesus', know God's reality and presence. But it is in the mysterious workings of God that they will come to faith.

Just think how it happened for you – maybe suddenly, maybe gradually, but you remember those moments that made a difference, moments we look back on and see Jesus' hand in. Moments that like Thomas turned us from doubting to believing.

- Bishop Martin

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Come, people of the Risen King
Who delight to bring Him praise
Come all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eyes to Him
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather children in.

*Rejoice, rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice;
O Church of Christ, rejoice!*

Come, those whose joy is morning sun
And those weeping through the night
Come, those who tell of battles won
And those struggling in the fight
For His perfect love will never change
And His mercies never cease
But follow us through all our days
With the certain hope of peace.

Rejoice, rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!...

Come, young and old from every land
Men and women of the faith
Come, those with full or empty hands
Find the riches of His grace
Over all the world, His people sing
Shore to shore we hear them call
The Truth that cries through every age:
"Our God is all in all!"

Rejoice, rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!...

Scriptures for our new priest:

We are hoping for a priest who can aspire to Philippians 2, and offer joy and humility in serving the Lord at St Thomas. To lift up holy hands in prayer (1 Timothy 2: 8) - and to keep hold of the deep truths of the faith (1 Timothy 3:9).

A prayer for Easter

Your love,
which breathed this world into being,
established a covenant people,
brought them out of captivity
and into a promised land.

Hallelujah!

Your love,
which from the moment of our birth
has known and called us by name
from out of this world's slavery
into the kingdom of God.

Hallelujah!

Your love,
poured into the heart of Jesus
who endured the nails of our sin,
defeated death to rise again
and causes our hearts to sing

Hallelujah!

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Rosemary, Eric Dickerson, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Margaret Christian, Natacha, Rex & Jill, Christine, Stephen, Samantha

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Katie, Gloria Elmer, Leslie Bloomfield, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Dagmar, Roy, Kenneth Leek, Angela

All who are affected by the Coronavirus: *For all who have lost their jobs; all who are despairing and living with loss or anxiety. For hospital and health care workers.*

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: Sally Carson, Jean Dominy. RIP

Prayer for our new Priest-in-Charge:

Lord, give us all wisdom and guidance as the search process goes ahead. We know that you have plans for us as a church - and we trust you. We pray that the right person will be drawn to us, that your Spirit will be at work.

Grant us a vision, Lord, to see what we can achieve, to reach out beyond ourselves, to stretch our capabilities, to increase our sense of purpose, to be sensitive to your presence at all times and listen to your call.

Amen.

Notices:

Church Open: Church is open for prayer 11.30-1.30 on Mondays & Thursdays.

APCM: our APCM this year will be on **Sunday 9th May** after the morning service. You will be able to join via Zoom if you aren't at church in person. Please put this date in your diary! Those writing reports, please get them to Lyanne in good time.

New Vicar Search: Now that we are advertising, please pray that the right person will be attracted to apply for the position. Rev Jackie is collecting scripture verses / words of encouragement & inspiration for our prayers. Do email anything you'd like to share. jackie@jbsears.com

Baby Bank: the Suffolk baby bank we are hosting in the community room would welcome donations of tinned potatoes, instant mash, and dried/long-life milk.

Booking for in-person services: other than the Wednesday 10am Eucharist, all services must be booked into. Online booking forms are sent out via email.

To book by phone, call **01473 742973** and leave a message saying which service/s you are booking for, your name, and how many (including yourself) you are booking for.



Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Myrtle Hughes; Samantha Holton & family; Emma Knight with Steve, Brad & Esmae; Jill Last; Zoe Lowe with Conrad, Kurt & Rebecca; James Matthews; Stephen Marginson

This Week:

Sunday 11th April

10am: Easter Eucharist with livestream and Zoom

Monday 12th April

11.30-1.30: Church open for prayer

Wednesday 14th April

10am: Eucharist

Thursday 15th April

11.30-1.30: Church open for prayer

4pm: Bible Basics

Sunday 18th April

10am: Eucharist (Andy Jefferson preaching) with livestream and zoom



11th: Gloria Elmer

Contacts:

Acting Priest-in-charge: Revd Cat Connolly

m: 07530 412988

Email: revcatconnolly@gmail.com

Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs

m:07906 663530

Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO

m: 07961 859344 Email: [sussexsi@aol.com](mailto:susseksi@aol.com)

Church wardens: Roger Elmer m:07810 274586

Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

Mary Bullass 625135

Gloria Elmer 745590

Rev Jackie 07962 172639

Revd Pat 464748

Rev Canon Chris 462109

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>