

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Χριστός Ἀνέστη!

“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.”

That one sentence has left Thomas forever labelled “Doubting Thomas.”

That’s how we have come to know him.

Jesus, however, never accuses Thomas of doubting.

Rather, Jesus, says, “Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

Christ could just have easily said that to the other disciples, too.

Thomas didn’t ask to see more than what the other disciples saw a week earlier.

Thomas may be the one that gets labelled “Doubting,” but the other disciples also reveal the difficulty of believing.

Thomas’ and the disciples’ unbelief is in being stuck in the house with the doors locked.

On the day of the Resurrection...

Christ opens the tomb and the disciples lock the doors.

Christ empties the tomb and the disciples fill the house.

Christ is on the loose and the disciples are bound in fear.

Once again, the disciples have missed the point!

They have locked out Mary Magdalene’s words of faith, hope, and love.

They have left the empty tomb of Jesus and have entered their own tombs of fear, doubt, and blindness.

The locked doors have become the great stone sealing their tomb.

Jesus had appeared to them in their locked room.

He had spoken to them.

He had breathed life into them.

Still though, a week later the disciples are in the same place, behind the same locked doors.

Their doors of faith are still closed.

Their minds and hearts are still closed.

Their eyes are still closed.

A week after Pascha not much has changed.

The house is still their tomb.

However, it’s not only the disciples.

I wonder, one week after Pascha, is our life different?

Where are we living?

In the freedom and joy of resurrection or behind locked doors?

I suspect we all know about those locked doors.

Sometimes it seems that Christ opens the tomb and declares forgiveness but we continue to live behind the locked doors of self-condemnation.

Christ opens the tomb and defeats death but we still live as if death is the final word.

Christ opens the tomb and offers new life but we lock the doors and live in the past.

Some of us might say:

"I really want to believe that Jesus' resurrection offers peace.

But I see wars across the world, families in conflict, and relationships broken.

I really want to believe that Jesus' resurrection overcomes death.

But I still cry for and feel the absence and loss of my child.

I really want to believe that Jesus' resurrection is real.

But I don't see much difference between my life this week compared to the week before Pascha."

The locked doors of our lives are not so much about what is going on around us.

These locked doors are primarily about what is happening within us:

fear, anger, guilt, hurt, grief, the refusal to change.

There are a thousand different locks on the doors of our life and they are always locked from the inside.

We're not all that different from the disciples.

We're not all that different from Thomas.

Thomas has become the personification of each one of us who has ever struggled to believe the resurrection.

We each live with at least one "unless clause."

"Unless I see wars cease, conflict resolved, and relationships reconciled, I will not believe.

Unless I feel the tears of grieving dry up, and the pain goes away, I will not believe.

Unless I experience some measurable difference in my life, I will not believe."

Far too often we condition the resurrection not on the power of God but on the sufficiency of the evidence.

Each condition becomes just another lock on the door.

Each hardship in our life adds a new lock on the door.

The more hardships we face, the more locked we become.

The more afraid we become.

The more faithless we become.

The more unable to cry, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

But today Christ tells us, "Do not be afraid! Arise!"

Today Christ comes back.

He comes back from the dead.

He comes back to the disciples on the evening of Pascha.

He comes back to them a week later.

He comes back to us now.

Again and again.

We struggle to believe and Christ just keeps on coming back.

When Jesus finds the disciples hiding behind the locked doors, He doesn't break open their lock.

He doesn't force them into the world of which they are afraid.

He simply joins them where they are.

Christ doesn't argue with them.

He doesn't criticize them.

He simply greets them.
Christ's first words to the disciples are "Peace be with you."
This is neither the peace of a casual greeting nor a wish.
It is a healing gift.
It is a restoration of their relationship with God.
It is new life, Paschal life.
After the greeting of peace, Jesus breaths His spirit into the disciples in an act of new creation.
Harkening back to the original creation.
As the Spirit brooded over creation and God breathed life into the first humans.
As new life was breathed into the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel's vision.
Ezekiel saw in a vision the breath of God returning life to dead bones.
The disciples receive in reality the breath of life by our resurrected Lord, who comes and stands with them in the locked upper room.

By our resurrected Lord who comes and stands with us.
Wherever we are...
In the midst of whatever fears may be consuming us...
Christ is always entering the locked places of our lives.
He enters our place of deep loneliness, disappointment, and sorrow.
He stands in our house of fear, confusion, and uncertainty.
He shows up in our room of illness, old age, and disability.
Unexpected, uninvited, and sometimes even unwanted.
Christ steps into our closed lives, closed hearts, closed minds.
Regardless of the circumstances the resurrected Lord shows up standing among us.
Regardless of the circumstances the resurrected Lord shows up bringing peace to us.
Regardless of the circumstances the resurrected Lord shows up offering life to us.
Christ shares His risen life with us.
We now live Christ's life.
We have a new center and core from which we live.
It is no longer we who live, but it is Christ who lives in us.

This is the reality of the resurrection.
The circumstances of our life and world do not necessarily change.
Our hardships do not disappear.
The resurrection does not end wars.
But the resurrected Lord breathes hope on us to pray for all the victims of war and national calamities.
The resurrection does not magically fix relationships.
But the resurrected Lord breathes courage on us to reconcile relationships and resolve conflict.
The resurrection does not eliminate our pain or tears over the death of a loved one.
But the resurrected Lord breathes strength on us to meet the days to come with steadfastness and patience in the joyful expectation of the resurrection.
The resurrection of Christ does not meet our conditions.
The resurrection of Christ empowers us to meet our conditions.

The resurrection of Christ enables us to live through these conditions.
Christ doesn't open automatically the locked door for us.
But His breath of life and peace on us are the keys that He gives to us.
To open our locked doors and to get out of the house.
To a new life, a new creation, a new way of being.

Just like the disciples.
It may have taken them several tries, but today they finally come out.
Out from fear, failure, and doubt.
Out from behind closed doors and into the world.
No longer as disciples but as apostles.
Just like Thomas.
We don't even know if Thomas takes Jesus up on the offer to put his finger in
Christ's wounds.
What we know is that for Thomas, the encounter with the risen Lord is enough.
For Thomas, Christ's greeting of peace and life is enough to unlock Thomas' door of
faith.
So, today Thomas cries out, "my Lord and my God."
With these words Thomas recognizes and names a new relationship, a new
worldview, a new way of being.
Doubting Thomas becomes Confessing Thomas.
Thomas the Apostle to the people of India.
The Apostle who sailed to India, strengthened by his Lord and his God.
The Apostle who fearfully preached his Crucified and Risen Lord and God, even to
the family of the pagan king of India.
The Apostle who courageously faced the wrath of the king of India, dying as martyr
for his Lord and his God with the spears of five soldiers.
This doesn't sound much like a doubter, does it?
It sounds like someone who grows and changes.
Someone for whom the empty tomb makes a difference.
Someone for whom the resurrection of Christ is real.

Today the Resurrected Lord steps into the midst of our house, through the locked
doors, and breathes peace and life into us.
And we take a deep breath.
We take in all the hope, courage, and strength to unlock and open the doors of our
life, and then get out of the house.
Not as passive observers of the feast of feasts, but as apostles;
the resurrected people in the life in Christ.
Strengthen by our Risen Lord, we go out to the lost, to the angry, to the unpleasant
brothers and sisters.
Thanking our Lord and our God for His great love and mercy.
Sharing His love and His mercy and His resurrected life.
Showing that we have been seen and touched by our Lord and our God.

Christ is Risen!