

*19When 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." 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So 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."*

*26A 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." 27Then 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." 28Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." 30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But 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.*

Mary, Thomas, Peter, Mary Magdalene - as different from one another as you are from the person sitting next to you. Mary full of faith - Thomas cautious, afraid of being labeled a gullible fool - Peter a plant in rocky soil, springing up quickly, then withering just as quickly under the light and heat of some questions - Mary Magdalene, troubled, tormented, then grateful beyond measuring after Jesus' healing.

Sometimes there is a whisper in our hearts of what a real Christian ought to be like. The whisper hints that our neighbor over there has not measured up.

Doubting Thomas, we call him. He wasn't ready to believe what he had not seen. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe," Jesus would say. Thomas was not exactly the way Jesus wanted Thomas to be.

But our gospel today makes it clear that when Thomas is not where Jesus wants him to be, Jesus comes to where Thomas is. How much better if Thomas had believed the word of the others! But Jesus appears once more, to offer his hands and his side.

Jesus comes to you where you are, works with you as you are, knows you as you are. The church of Jesus Christ is a "come as you are party" - "Just as I am," we sing.

But God was not content to simply leave Thomas a doubter. As the drama hinted, as the gospel tells, faith would be in Thomas' future. The church of Jesus Christ is a come as you are

party, but as we leave God wants each and every one dressed in faith. Everything God is doing in your life is so that you will believe in Jesus Christ. Answering prayers - lighting the path through dark nights - providing forgiveness and strength - all so that you may believe in Jesus in life and in death.

In faith Thomas and Mary, Peter and Mary Magdalene, you and the person next to you all are made one. This is the miraculous work of God, and God will do it, through Jesus the crucified and resurrected one. Amen