

Worship Service- April 3rd, 2015

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am.

After a short prayer with the choir, the liturgist, choir, and organist will enter behind the Pastor and take their seats. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make these announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE “He Leadeth Me, O Blessed Thought!” - Robert J. Powell Dr. Elizabeth Davis

After the organist finishes, the choir will stand.

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP “Rejoice in the Day!” - Dan Dykema The Chancel Choir

After the Choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the pulpit & say...

“Would you join me in reading responsively our call to worship, adapted from Psalm 150 and printed in our bulletins.”

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 150)

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary;

Praise him in his mighty firmament for his mighty deeds;

Praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

Praise him with trumpet sound, lute, and harp!

Praise him with tambourine and dance;

Praise him with strings and pipe!

Praise him with clanging cymbals!

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... God of the resurrection, through the power of your Spirit, inspire us to make a leap of faith into your loving arms. May we believe the words of Scripture when they speak of your victory over death, and may we accept the promises you make for the future. We praise you for your love, your joy, and your wonderful living hope -- hope that points us to a future that we cannot see, but that we believe you will guide us through every trial. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

“Would all of you who are able, please stand and join in singing “The Day of Resurrection”, #118 in *The Hymnal*.

*HYMN OF PRAISE “The Day of Resurrection” *The Hymnal* #118

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say....

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Christ is risen, but do our our lives reveal that Good News. Every-one who has closed the doors of his heart to the loving God who longs to claim us is invited to come with me now to the throne of grace as we join in humble confession and pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray.....

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(In Unison)

God of all Creation, we have sung the Easter hymns and heard the Easter story, but the roots of resurrection have taken only shallow root in our lives. We are lukewarm in our desire to be made new because we recognize how much about us needs to be changed. We have been imprisoned by our fears and bound by despair. Our comfort with the realm of the familiar keeps us from reaching out to you, who alone can transform us for the better. Forgive and help us to overcome our lack of honesty, faith, and trust, so that we may experience the blessing of Easter and the peace of Christ. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(pause for about 30 seconds of silence)

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

By his great mercy, God has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. In this we rejoice, for we are receiving the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls....Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

*GLORIA PATRI

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Having been reconciled to the Father, let us be reconciled to one another and share Christ's peace. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward to the front pew for a message from the Lord prepared just for them by Ms. Karen.”

The liturgist will take a seat until the children begin leaving the front.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

(All Singing)

Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;

Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;

Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.

As the children leave, the Liturgist will step to the pulpit and say,

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

If we believe in the resurrection of our Living Lord, we must witness that faith in word and deed, with time and treasure. Let us express our thanks for God's steadfast love as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

Take your seat for the offertory.

THE OFFERTORY

“Prayer” - Robert J. Powell

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*DOXOLOGY

(In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say...

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray.... Gracious God, you have given us the ultimate gift in the death and resurrection of your Son. We humbly offer these gifts to you. Consecrate them to your use — that the ministry of this church might serve as a witness to those who still doubt. Amen.

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

“The Apostles' Creed”

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick & the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The liturgist will invite the congregation to... “Be seated,” and then take his seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Joanna Smith, Soprano & Dan Dykema, Tenor

“The King of Love My Shepherd Is” - Harry Rowe Shelley

As the choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the first chapter of Peter's First Letter, beginning with the third verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1058 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the Word of God. . . .

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith— being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire— may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with his family or friends in the congregation. Thanks so much for your help!

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our Sermon text for this morning is drawn from the Twentieth Chapter of John's Gospel, beginning at the nineteenth verse. You can find the passage on page 945 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God. . . .

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."

And 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; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, 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 in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but 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; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing."

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 believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Our thanks be to God!

THE SERMON

“After”

Some would say that Easter is over, the kids are back in school, we're all back at work, and the real world with all its problems and challenges and disappointments is pressing on us once more. So what do we do after Easter? Where is the Good News for **TODAY?** Evil didn't surrender or

disappear, there are still bombings by ISIS, there are still robberies, and rapes, and murders whenever I open a newspaper or try to watch the news on TV.

And you think to yourself, "I want to believe that Jesus is Lord, I just don't see any evidence of it? I want to believe, but how can I?"

We understand and identify with Thomas more than I think we would like to admit. He is saying what we are thinking. We are angry. We are angry because we have been hurt. We want Jesus to do something! Don't leave me looking like some naive, gullible, fool. Show up and make yourself known!

Picture the scene. The doors are locked. The room is dim. There is a low murmur of voices in the background as you sit in a corner and review for the hundredth time the contradictions, the injustices, and even your own role in the horrible death of your best friend-- all the things you did or didn't do that played a role in his death.

At some point in our lives, we have all been in a room just like that one. We have let ourselves down, our families,... we have failed our friends, and Lord knows we have disappointed the God who loves us. We see our own sins, we know our own hearts and we become very good at beating up on ourselves.

But I wonder, "What do you see after betrayal, after disappointment, after sin? What do you see "after"?"

I'll tell you what I see. I immediately see "Fear." It is very obvious and real – the disciples are scared of the Jews, according to John and the doors are locked. After disappointment and betrayal, there is fear.

Fear is something that we have all had to deal with. It was Dave Barry, that great humorist, who said, "All of us are born with a set of instinctive fears - of falling, of the dark, of lobsters, of falling on lobsters in the dark, or speaking before a Rotary Club, and of the words "Some Assembly Required."

When I was a child, my brothers and I thought that it was great fun to scare each other. One of us would be screaming hysterically in fear, and the others would be howling in laughter. It's why the horror and suspense film genres lead all other categories on the best seller lists and at the box office.

But real fear is not funny. Real fear of real hurts causes us to lash out. We want to make sure that we never get hurt again.

A mother was busy doing laundry one summer morning when she heard the piercing cry of her five year old son, obviously in pain. She dropped her basket of clean laundry and ran into the bedroom where she had left her children playing quietly just moments before. Mom found her son crying with his his two-year-old sister pulling with all her might at a double handful of his hair. She gently released the little girl's grip, gently kissed the top of his head, and said comfortingly to the boy, "There, there. She didn't mean it. She doesn't know that hurts." He nodded his acknowledgement, and she left the room. She started down the hall to the laundry room, but before she reached it, her little girl screamed. Rushing back in once more, she asked, "What happened?" The little boy replied, "She knows now."

The 5 year old was precocious in his treatment of the sister who had hurt him. That's the way we adults do it-- teach'em that there are consequences to their actions. If they bite you, bite'em back. How are they ever going to learn, if you don't teach'em and teach'em good?

Where does FEAR come from? It actually is self-generated based on our interpretations of what we see. A simple acrostic for fear is this:

False
Evidence
Appearing
Real.

Fear was real for them and it is real for us. And most of the time it comes because we do not understand what we are seeing.

But not only do I see fear in that room, after fear I see forgiveness.

I see forgiveness demonstrated by the first words out of Jesus' mouth when he entered the room. "Peace be with you!" Not "Where were you guys?" Not "How could you have let me down?" But, "Peace be with you" - forgiveness from the start.

His presence indicates forgiveness. How many times have we in our hurt, believed that we were right in expecting the one who hurt us to come crawling in on their hands and knees before us, begging for our forgiveness. We are the injured party, if anyone is going to humble themselves, let it be the guilty!

Thomas is hurt and afraid because Jesus hasn't lived up to his expectations. Mind you, Jesus had told him, told them all, exactly what must happen. The prophets had told them all before that. Thomas is the one who failed to listen to what his Master was telling him. Thomas sees his failure to listen and to comprehend as Jesus' failure to inform or fulfill.

Moreover, Jesus has appeared once, and Thomas wasn't there. Thomas had separated himself from the rest of the believers. Lest we be too hard on Thomas, let us remember how often we do the same thing. We hit a spiritual low.... something happens that hurts and we blame God for allowing it to happen.... a question comes up that we just can't answer and it leaves us confused and full of doubts about our faith. Unless we are of sufficient age and experience that we have learned to trust God in such times, or that we attend church out of habit, and on one of those habitual visits, we hear something unexpected from the Word, and suddenly we understand what has troubled us. Unless we maintain fellowship with other believers, we reduce our chances of ever hearing what we need to hear, or seeing what we need to see.

That's what happened in Thomas' case. He was likely in that Upper Room, not because he expected to see Jesus, but because he wanted to be with the only people who knew him in this big city. Jesus doesn't confront Thomas on the street and humiliate him, or turn him around with a mega dose of shock and awe. It is the risen Lord who humbles himself and comes to Thomas on Thomas' own terms. If Thomas has to touch the nail holes and put his hand in the wound on Jesus' side in order to believe, so be it. Without condemning or scolding, Jesus invites Thomas to examine the truth. He didn't call him a "Doubting Thomas." That's a name we've invented for this man. I think we've done so because we see in Thomas our own unbelief. We usually condemn those in which we see our own sins reflected.

And Thomas believed, and his faith was restored.

So what do we do after Easter? What do we do when evil reminds us that while Jesus has won the war, Satan has not yet surrendered and there are still battles still to fight, pain and confusion that we will live with until rapture.

After death, we celebrate new life; after the dark night of the soul, filled with terror and confusion, new hope; and after all our doubts and questions, new faith. After everything that evil throws our way, we come to church, we hear his Word, and we await his presence to come to us. And at the right time, he will stand before us, and we will see, **AND WE WILL BELIEVE.**

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

Almighty God, we give you thanks and praise for all good things which you have given us. But more than all, we praise you for the blessed hope of eternal life made possible through the sacrifice of Your Eternal Son. We pray that you would fill us, and all your servants, with such faith and hope, that the glory of Christ living in all believers, may grow and increase, until it has been made perfect as you intend.

God of Truth and Light, deliver us from the dark places where we hide to avoid confronting our many faults. Lift us above our despair with the knowledge that sin has been defeated and death has been destroyed. Fortify our hearts with an undying hope, and set our affections upon things

eternal, so that we, having been clothed in imperishability, may bear the likeness of your Son into all the world.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Through this reminder of your steadfast love and unfailing presence, dispel our doubts with the faith that comes from knowing that you are with us and that you will never leave us, even when we fail you most grievously. Give us strength to serve you faithfully until we feast with you and with the redeemed of all the ages at your table in glory, through Christ our Lord. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(The congregation will sing in unison)

Malotte

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, & the power & the glory, forever. Amen.*

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

The Words of Institution

The Distribution of the Elements

The Prayer After Receiving

Almighty God, we thank you that in your great love you have fed us with the spiritual food and drink of the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ, and have given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. Grant that this Sacrament may be to us a comfort in affliction, and a pledge of our inheritance in that kingdom where there is no death, neither sorrow nor crying, but the fullness of joy with all your saints; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our closing hymn, "Because He Lives", which is printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Because He Lives"

God sent His son, they called Him, Jesus;
He came to love, heal and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives! *Refrain*
*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living, just because He lives!*
And then one day, I'll cross the river,
I'll fight life's final war with pain;
And then, as death gives way to vict'ry,
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives! *Refrain*

*THE BLESSING

*THE CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Go, My Children, Fed and Nourished"

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.
Here my Spirit's power filled you,
Here His tender comfort stilled you;
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis