

Sermon – April 24, 222 – Resurrection Thomas

John 20:19-31

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.

Good morning! I am going to speak today about Resurrection, and new beginnings.

First, I wanted to show you this lovely framed cross stitch, given to me in 2007 when I was leaving St James, Moncton. It says:

‘When God closes a door, He opens a window.’

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This saying seems appropriate right now; appropriate for the celebration of the resurrection.

The disciples were mourning the loss of Jesus, their teacher, their leader and friend. They had been absorbed by his presence for at least three years.

They were also afraid! afraid of those who brought about Jesus’ death. The disciples knew they were in danger. And so they were **locked in** the darkened house...tomb like, womb-like, sealed off, hiding from the rest of the world. A door had closed. It seemed they were at a dead-end.

Then Jesus came and stood among his disciples. He showed the marks in his hands and his side. And with this coming of Jesus amongst them, a window opened; a fresh breeze blew and a new horizon was visible through it.

The risen Lord breathed the breath of a new Spirit into his frightened disciples. Once, long ago, in the beginning, after the Lord God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, the Lord breathed the breath of life into his nostrils and Adam came to life.

Now Jesus breathes into them a new Spirit, the Holy Spirit, giving them new life. Then he sends them out. As the Father has sent Jesus, so he sends them into the world, to live their new life in a way they had never imagined. They will not have Jesus bodily, but they will have the Spirit breathed into them...’abide in me as I abide in you’, says Jesus, so that you may bear much fruit; so that you may bring life which is peace and harmony, shalom into the world.

I have come to understand that resurrection is not only something that happened to Jesus 2000 years ago. Resurrection is happening today, all around us. We are a resurrection people, whose motto is “New Life”. We are identified by an empty tomb and a Saviour who was transformed by death. We are followers of Jesus Christ. He is the authority in our lives; our hearts are his...We are a sent people,

sent by him to be resurrection people who bring new life, especially where there appears to be no life.

The Resurrection means Jesus is risen. Jesus lives, it is exciting! But we play a key part ...for we are bearers of his life Spirit...As his children, we are called to be agents of new life.

Even with our doubts, like Thomas's doubts, Christ works the miracle of resurrection. Our lack of imagination, our inability to believe in new life, new possibilities, is raw material for Christ. He knows our uncertainties, our fears and brings us through darkness to light. We are much like the disciples, shut up in the darkened room with no view. Can we trust in new life to happen right here in this parish and in our own lives? Can we accept when doors close? Can we place our hand in our Lord's hand and ask that he reveal the opened window with the fresh breeze and the new view?

Once he caught on, Thomas pronounced one of the strongest statements of faith in the New Testament. He said "**My Lord and my God!**" It is thought he went on to India with a strong mission for Christ, dying there a martyr.

So we are called to be bearers of hope and of new life, even in the face of loss, fear, struggle and uncertainty. We are challenged...to take risks for life, sometimes in situations that do not seem life-giving. We are called to offer our God-given gifts, confident each of us does have **something** to offer and that is enough, because we are God's beloved.

A modern day resurrection story is the story of Terry Fox. It is still a mystery how a young man who had just lost a leg to cancer, came up with the vision of running across Canada for Cancer research. His mother had grave doubts and said 'no' at first. His parents worried about his health, highway traffic, vast distances. But there was no stopping Terry. And so in April 1980, 42years ago, he began his long trek. When asked *why* he was doing it, Terry talked about the real heroes of the run, the people left behind in cancer wards. The physical toll of the run on him was nothing he'd say compared to those cancer wards. Running was his way of bringing life when he was confronting death. He didn't make it across Canada. He had to stop his run because the Cancer had come back. It seemed then that God had closed a door. But a window, a huge window had opened. Terry's goal was to raise \$1 for every Canadian - \$24 million. Today, the Terry Fox foundation has raised more than \$800 million worldwide for cancer research... many, many times more than Terry ever dreamed.

Today, due to cancer research, Terry's life would be savable. Terry is gone, he will be in our minds forever young, running westward into the wind. But he left new life, he left his vision of running to raise money to find the cure for cancer. Even though he died, many, many have lived because of his efforts

And so, Jesus breathes new breath into us, just as he breathed new breath into the disciples that day. We are bearers of new life, even with our doubts and limitations. We are **sent** out into the world to bring new life, even if just by our presence. Isn't it fitting that the season of Easter and new life happens in spring when what seemed dead in nature comes alive?

One year I worried about the crocuses in our garden. They had just started appearing when we had a snowstorm. How could those delicate blooms survive the cold and heavy wet snow? I needn't have worried. ...the next time I looked... There they were, the whole bed of them, their heads held up, flashing their brilliant yellows and purples. New life despite winter blasts! They are survivors, and so are we.

New life is emerging in branches that looked dead. So let new life emerge right here in us. Let us look for resurrection opportunities in our own lives and in our parish. Let us be detectives, finding ways to bring life...it may be by mending broken relationships, by saying 'yes' to someone's request, or by trying a new way of doing things. Let us steadfastly believe that a window is opening and with it a new horizon. Let us trust that people are good, that they are doing the best they can and that new life is about working together. God scatters in our paths opportunities to bring life. Let us remember through Jesus, we are bearers of new life, a mysterious and wonderful vocation. Amen