

Rev Dr Nathan John Haydon
St Peter's Episcopal Church, Ladue
Sermon
12 April 2026, Second Sunday of Easter Year A, "Low Sunday"

Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Assigned Lectionary Readings: Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

Sermon

In the year 1237, a man named Jordan, a Dominican priest from the region of Saxony, experienced a shipwreck leaving Palestine while visiting churches there, and drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while near the Holy Land. A few days after that event, a young man who had entered a Carmelite monastery was experiencing significant doubts about his vocation and becoming a monk. In the midst of that inner turmoil, Jordan appeared to the young monk in a dream, and reassured him, saying, "Fear not, brother. Everyone who serves Jesus Christ to the end will be saved." About seven centuries later, in 1963, the academic and theologian CS Lewis died in Oxford. Lewis had a cordial friendship with a theologian and translator of the Bible, named JB Phillips. They weren't exactly close friends, and Phillips wasn't really thinking much of Lewis after his death. However, a few days after the death of Lewis, Phillips was in his study in Dorset, England, and Lewis appeared, sitting in a chair nearby, looking alive and healthy. Phillips was a skeptic of the supernatural, but he recounts of this visitation, that Lewis was "large as life and twice as natural." A week later, Lewis again appeared to Phillips as he was reading in bed. At this point in his life, Phillips was experiencing a diagnosed clinical depression. In both of these visits to Phillips, Lewis had one message for him, delivered with a grin: "It's not as hard as you think, you know." And then he would vanish.

If we go back in time almost two thousand years, we encounter another story like the two I just mentioned. People wrestling with doubts, conflict, and turmoil. Our reading from John's gospel portrays a moment with disciples gathered together to process the events that have just happened. It is no stretch of the imagination to say that they were traumatized. Cathy Caruth, an academic and leading scholar on trauma says that trauma "is the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness and horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge."¹ This means that trauma is not only the event itself, but the response to it. Their beloved rabbi was murdered, and the body was missing. Prior to this, Mary Magdalene had seen the risen Lord, and acting as an apostle to the Apostles, she offered the first Easter proclamation of resurrection to the disciples — but of course, seeing is believing, and therefore, the disciples remained perplexed, bewildered, and in hiding. Their experience led them to be untrusting. Deanna Thompson, a professor of religion who received a diagnosis of Stage IV breast cancer, but then experienced remission, writes in her book entitled *Glimpsing Resurrection* that "the Christian story bend[s] toward resolution while the plots of our own lives stubbornly resist it."² All life is indelibly marked by the resolution of resurrection, and yet for one reason or another our lives do not always reflect that, and the sacred reality of the Paschal victory is impeded.

It was true then, in that moment with the disciples, as it is now, that our lives will stubbornly resist the resolution of Easter, which is why the focal point of today's gospel is not the disciples, and not even Thomas, but it is the risen Lord. Jesus transcends the locked door, the limitations and barriers we resurrect to protect ourselves and limit our vulnerableness, and yet in

¹ Jenny Edkins, "Remembering Relationality: Trauma Time and Politics" in *Memory, Trauma, and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between Past and Present*, edited by Duncan Bell. New York: Palgrave MacMillian (2006), 107.

² Deanna Thompson, "A gospel of irresolution: Illness, trauma, and getting to hope." *Dialog* 61.4 (2023), quoted from the abstract.

his resurrection he overcomes them all. Of this moment, the late Pope Francis says that “Jesus... always comes back: When the doors are closed, he comes back; when we are in doubt, he comes back; when, like Thomas, we need to encounter him and to touch him up close, he comes back.”³ So Christ comes back to them, and even when even when it seemed like peace was nowhere to be found, he proclaims that peace is with them. And Christ comes back yet again for the one that was missing, Thomas; and even in disbelief Thomas receives the immensity of resurrection cloistered within the body of the Son of God. A body that is still pierced, and yet is completely whole. Thomas said that he would not believe until he could experience it for himself; and Christ responds to Thomas about this connection of seeing and believing. But when Christ says “blessed are those who have not seen and yet come to believe,” there a few different ways of understanding the word “believe” here. The Greek word used can be translated as faith, or the act of believing, but can also mean the capability to trust. Thomas may have well said, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, I will not trust.” And in response, Christ could have replied “Do not doubt, but trust.” We live in times where it seems trust and hope are ravaged and broken, as if we see Christ crucified again in those that are vulnerable, exploited, and attacked. With broken trust, we are no different than the disciples, and no different than Thomas; yet Jesus did not judge them for their lack of trust, but invited them deeper within himself.

So I would say the same to you: Do not doubt, but trust. Believe in God—and this is the challenge—but also trust God. Believe in the resurrection—and in this is the challenge—but also trust in the resurrection, and trust that the resurrected Lord will come back again, and again, and again. Be as Mary Magdalene, the apostle to apostles, and proclaim to disciples in disbelief and untrusting Thomases everywhere, that Christ is risen. Proclaim it to yourself that you may trust

³ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2022/documents/20220424-regina-caeli.html>

again, proclaim it to those that are weary, those on the margins, the vulnerable, the hurt, the lost. May the peace brought by resurrection overcome any knowledge and experience of pain you have, and any door you could lock. Death could not stop Jordan of Saxony and CS Lewis from giving their messages, and it couldn't stop the Son of God. It can't stop us either. So leave your locked rooms, and let nothing stop you. Thanks be to God that we can trust in the peace and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who will not stop to come to us again, and again, and again. Amen.

AMDG