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## *A Week Later - Peace Be With You*

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**A Sermon at The Cathedral of St. Philip**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**  
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**The Second Sunday of Easter**

John 20.19-31

A 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."  
-John 20:26

Today is a week later.

We are a week later from Easter Sunday. And what a glorious day it was. For one day, or maybe for at least one moment, people and relationships were where they should be. Even the world was where it should be.

Families last week were gathered for Easter brunches or Easter Egg hunts. Faithful disciples were at church. Even if they had not been since last Easter, people were in church, at all hours of Easter Day!

Or maybe good people were on vacation, taking a well-deserved Easter break. Or maybe you were away with distant family or friends enjoying a grand Easter dinner. Easter flowers were blooming. The day was glorious. A gallant sea captain was rescued from pirates by the United States Navy.

It was a beautiful day last week. People and relationships were where they should be; even the world was where it should be. It was easy to proclaim, "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" It was easy to say, "Jesus is here." Jesus is here.

But today is a week later. Today is the Second Sunday of Easter. A week after Easter Day, or even a day afterward, or a month afterward, it is a bit more difficult to say "Alleluia! Christ is risen!"

Can Jesus be present today? Can Jesus be present today in the same way that Jesus was present on Easter Day? Can the power of the resurrection be present with us at other times than just Easter Day?

The passage we have just read, from the Gospel of John, chapter twenty, points toward an answer. We all know that Jesus appeared to his disciples in the evening of the day of resurrection. He said, "Peace be with you." He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. He said, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven."

But Thomas was not there on the First Sunday of Easter. Scripture does not say where Thomas was. Maybe he was out of

town. Maybe he was at another meeting. Maybe he was with his family having dinner. And Thomas, known now as "doubting" Thomas, admitted that "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."

It was a week later that Jesus did appear again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Jesus repeated what he had said before, "Peace be with you." Then Jesus encouraged Thomas to touch him, to touch the wounds of his hands and side. Thomas, the apostle of honesty and courage, touches the wounds of Christ, and he proclaims, "My Lord and my God." I believe Thomas is really the apostle of honesty and courage, for it takes those qualities to admit doubt and to touch pain.

It is rather easy to believe in Jesus on Easter Day. The church and our western culture all proclaim it. The flowers and blooming dogwoods proclaim it. Our friends and family proclaim it: "Alleluia! Christ is Risen!"

But it is not so easy to believe in Jesus a week later. It is not so easy to believe in Jesus when we are in doubt. It is not so easy to believe in Jesus where we are wounded. It is not so easy to believe in Jesus when we are in spiritual pain.

A week after Easter Day, doubt is back. Is this church life really the one I want to be involved in? Am I really in the right job, after all? The economy may still be in the same situation it was in last month, after all. Maybe we doubt whether we are out of the woods yet.

Can we believe in Jesus even when we doubt?

A week after Easter Day, it looks like we are still wounded, too. Those holes in our hearts are still there. Someone jilted us. Someone else refuses to let go of their bitterness towards us. Some of us are still wounded by financial loss.

And, finally, a week after Easter Day, that old spiritual pain is back, too. Something in us still refuses forgiveness. And there is something else in us that we cannot release; we can't let go of it! What is wrong? What are we missing?

Jesus did not show up just to Thomas on the Sunday after Easter Sunday. Jesus shows up to us, too, a week later, a week after the Resurrection.

And Jesus says, "Peace be with you." When you have finished your vacation, and that old frantic and frazzled pace has set back in, Jesus says, "Peace be with you." When the doors of your life are closed and locked out of some fear -and we seem to be afraid of everything these days""when your doors are locked, Jesus says, "Peace be with you."

And when we are nursing our wounds, Jesus shows us his. His wounds are reminders that even the Resurrection does not erase scars. Jesus was risen from the dead, but he still had holes in his hands and side; he was still wounded. The Resurrection does not erase the wounds of our lives either; the Resurrection redeems and sanctifies them. Can Jesus be present where we are wounded and pain? Yes, that is exactly where Jesus does show up!

Jesus declares "Peace" upon our frantic pace and upon our scary wounds. Jesus declares "Peace" to our internal doubt and to our broken relationships.

Every day of our lives is "a week later" than something. It is a week after the wedding. It is a week after the funeral. It is a week after the party. A week after the vacation. It is a week after the graduation. It is a week after the birth.

Where is Jesus a week later? Where is Jesus on the Sunday after Easter Day? Where is he a month afterwards, three months afterwards? Jesus will be where people are in doubt, where people are wounded, where people are in some sort of pain. Jesus will be the One sending the Holy Spirit into those places. Jesus will be the One saying, "Peace, peace be with you." And that peace will be the power of the Resurrection.

For the Resurrection does not occur just one time in the Christian life; it does not happen just on Easter Day. It is today, a week later, and tomorrow, and next month, too.

AMEN.

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