

Whitehorse Uniting Church

Sunday 7 April 2024

Easter 2_B



Jesus appears to his disciples and commissions them

Introit: Be still for the presence of the Lord

Northern Baptist Association 2012

<https://youtu.be/ZugvUQ4m90U?si=oVPDpdTsP8JcYlo->

Welcome



Gebhardt, Thomas von. Thomas the Doubter, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58314> [retrieved March 31, 2024]. Original source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_the_Doubter_by_Eduard_von_Gebhardt.jpg.

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place.
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.



Image T. Lyndon

Call to Worship

He is Risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia, Alleluia.

Prayer



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Lord Jesus,

You appeared to the disciples that first night after you were raised from the dead when they remembered the cross and empty tomb, when they hid behind locked doors, in fear.

You appeared and they saw, heard, and touched you, and believed.

Fear departed and faith was restored, and their hearts were filled with joy.

Lord may all fear depart from our hearts and may our hearts be filled with joy.

Lord, Jesus, you commissioned your disciples, for the ministry of forgiveness. You breathed on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Lord, Jesus, commission us for the ministry of forgiveness.

Breathe on us and fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Call us, give us grace to forgive, help us remember you died on the cross to set us free from sin. Help us continue with your ministry of forgiveness. Amen

407 Breathe on me Breath of God

Rosemary Siemens 2023

<https://youtu.be/jxqtzju47l?si=0YDy-D6cSpD9MwOs>

Readings

1 John 1:1-2:2

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— **3** what we have seen and heard we also declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** We are writing these things so that our^[a] joy may be complete.

God Is Light

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; **7** but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Christ Our Advocate

2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, **2** and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

John 20:19-31

Jesus appears to the disciples.

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

The Commissioning of the disciples

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Thomas

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin^[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So 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."

²⁶ 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." ²⁷ Then 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." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may continue^[b] to believe that Jesus is the Messiah,^[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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Hymn 584 Just as I am

SE Samonte 2014

<https://youtu.be/CxA0TFe3-Uo?si=DiB2ZJG-i lhYa70>

Prayer of Commitment

The Covenant Service, Uniting in Worship, The Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Commission on Liturgy 1988 (adapted)

God promises us new life in him.

We receive this promise

and pledge to live not for ourselves but for God.

This covenant is renewed each time we meet, at the table of the Lord.

Today we meet, as generations before us have met,

to renew that which bound them and now binds us to God.

Please stand.

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim this covenant for ourselves,
and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

To take this yoke upon us means that we are content,
that he appoints us our place and work, and that he himself be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done:
some are easy, others are difficult

some bring honour, others bring reproach
 some are suitable to our natural inclinations,
 and material interests.
 Others are contrary to both.
 In some we may please Christ and please ourselves.
 in others we cannot please Christ
 except by denying ourselves.
 Yet the power to do all these things,
 is given us in Christ, who strengthens us.
 Therefore, let us make this covenant with God our own,
 trusting in the eternal promises and relying on divine grace.

Let us pray:

Lord God,
 in baptism, you brought us into union with Christ,
 who fulfils your gracious covenant.
 In bread and wine, we receive the fruit of his obedience.
 help us with joy to take upon ourselves the yoke of Christ.
 Lord help us to seek and do your perfect will within your church and the world.
 Send your Spirit upon us and commission each one of us for the ministry of forgiveness and all other forms
 of ministry you have called us to respond to and embrace.

Moment of Silence

Leader: I am no longer my own, but yours.

All:

**I am no longer my own, but yours.
 Put me to what you will,
 rank me with whom you will.
 Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
 Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you.
 Exalted for you or brought low for you.
 Let me be full, let me be empty.
 Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
 I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
 to your pleasure and disposal.**

**And now, glorious, and blessed God,
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 you are mine and I am yours,
 to the glory and praise of your name. Amen.**

Hymn 380 Yours be the Glory

St Mary's Church, Portsea. Hymn Channel 2016

https://youtu.be/GaoV5w2Qfag?si=C9k83D_FW3dzqMmS

Sermon – Rev Tina Jesus appears to his disciples and commissions them.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.



Gebhardt, Thomas von. Thomas the Doubter, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58314> [retrieved March 31, 2024]. Original source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_the_Doubter_by_Eduard_von_Gebhardt.jpg.

Joó, Zoltán. Doubting Thomas, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57879> [retrieved March 31, 2024]. Original source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hitetlen_Tam%C3%A1s.jpg

Caravaggio, Michelangelo Merisi da, 1573-1610. The Incredulity of Saint Thomas, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=54170> [retrieved March 31, 2024]. Original source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Incredulity_of_Saint_Thomas_by_Caravaggio.jpg.



Did you grow up during a time when you were told it was wrong to doubt?

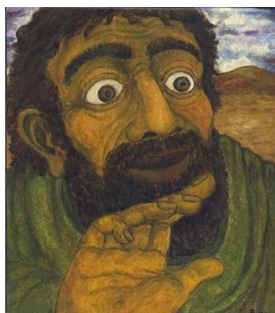
Were you discouraged from asking questions about your faith?

I remember going to church as a child with my grandmother and having to wear a hat, sit still, stay silent and not turn around to look at people behind me. I'm sure you may have had similar memories.

At Sunday school I was taught doubting Thomas should not have insisted on seeing, hearing, and touching Jesus, before he believed. Yet, it is Thomas who declares John's Christology: *My Lord and my God!*

John's first letter is addressed to the church in Turkey. He speaks highly of disciples who were witnesses and had seen, heard, and touched Jesus. Because of their witness all of us can believe in the risen Jesus. Perhaps Thomas was one of these witnesses.

Thomas insisted on seeing, hearing, and touching Jesus. He wanted to be sure he had risen, just as the other disciples had said. He had to find out for himself.



Perhaps Jesus rebuked Thomas for doubting. Jesus says: *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.*

What do we do with our doubts?

Perhaps doubts are the building blocks of our faith and when we doubt and question, we find out more so we can discover and discern where our faith suits within us. Perhaps doubts and questions deepen our faith.

Testing things and finding out what connects with us, helps us explore our faith. It helps us make sense of it, own it, and make it ours. Just like Thomas did.



I remember studying theology as a lay leader at United Faculty at the time when members of the Uniting, Anglican and Catholic churches taught and were students, where over 250 students studied alongside candidates.

John Honnor was a Jesuit and physicist teaching Introduction to Christology. One day there were around a hundred students in the lecture theatre, and he invited us to ask any question we wanted. At first everyone was shocked and silent. There was so much energy in the theatre and it was almost like we could hear people's minds ticking over. Can I ask that question? The one I've saved up all my life.

Then everyone asked questions and John answered some but didn't promise to answer all. I had a question I'd saved up since I was a kid, and was wondering: Can I ask that one? I was almost bursting. Then like everyone else I asked the question. It felt so good! I've never forgotten the energy in that lecture theatre on that day.

The bible evokes so many questions. It takes a lifetime to understand only a fraction of the fundamental myths, mystical experiences, God moments, poetry, history, stories and parables, eyewitness accounts and personal experiences. The bible's richness offers insights to the diversity of people on this planet. We may read something today and not understand, then read it tomorrow and understand perfectly.

The word, the logos, the inspired word, the word is like a two-edged sword that penetrates to the very marrow of our being. In today's readings Jesus is the living word, the divine logos. The Word of life.

Doubting helps us to look deeper in order to understand these mysteries. Asking questions is part of a long process of looking below the surface of things where we grow in our faith and come to believe.

I wonder if doubting helps us walk in the light and find Jesus in the light and have fellowship with one another. God is light and now comes in Jesus as light. Light may symbolise these revelations from God and coming to understand them.

The good news for today is the disciples didn't need to have all the answers or an established faith for Jesus to commission them for the ministry of forgiveness. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon them, and they received the Spirit. That alone was enough to empower them for ministry.

Quiet Moment

Offering prayer

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Savior, amen.



Prayers of the People - Sharon Collins



Image T. Lyndon

Prayer courtesy of Michael Leunig

A Common Prayer

God help us to change. To change ourselves and to change our world. To know the need for it. To deal with the pain of it. To feel the joy of it. To undertake the journey without understanding the destination. The art of gentle revolution. Amen

Caring and Loving God

We remember those in places of conflict – the injured; the dying; those who have lost loved ones; who have been taken or separated from their families; who have fled and become refugees; those who struggle to find food, medicine, a roof over their heads, a place of safety. Lord bring them comfort and support and inspire governments to work towards a peaceful solution for Israel and Palestine, and Russia and the Ukraine and other areas of war and conflict. We thank you for the brave souls who go into areas like this to provide medical help or comfort and support and we especially remember those aid workers who have been killed or injured while doing this essential work.

We remember the wonderful work being done in research facilities and hospitals to find cures for illnesses and diseases that continue to ravage parts of our community like COVID, influenza, cancer and heart disease. We pray for more access to vaccination in Third World countries where children still die from measles and whooping cough.

We pray for those in our community who are struggling financially – who are finding it hard to pay the mortgage, to pay for their children’s activities and school uniforms or put nourishing food on the table. Help them to get the help they need and to keep their families together. Give comfort to those who are homeless due to poverty, mental health or impossible family situations – may they find the right help and may those in authority provide funding for organizations that help the homeless.

We pray for the growing together of our Whitehorse Uniting congregation. Bless and inspire Rev Tina and Rev Peter as they lead us on this journey together. We pray your blessing on those of our congregation not here today due to illness or other circumstance and all those watching from home or elsewhere. May we continue to be a caring community and live the life you would have us live.

Lord bless all those we love and who need our prayers and support. In this moment of silence we bring them to you..... Lord may we all feel your presence and strength as we go into another week and do our best to become the people of your way. This is our prayer. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven
 hallowed be your name
 your Kingdom come
 your will be done on earth as in heaven
 give us today Our Daily Bread
 forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us
 save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil
 for the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and always Amen

Holy Communion



Image – T. Lyndon

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

In Jesus of Nazareth,
 in compassion for the outcast,
 forgiveness for the fallen,
 hope for the poor and hungry;

in his life poured out for others
and broken in rejection and disdain
you have made yourself known.

We proclaim your power in goodness
and your might in compassion, as we say:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Nurture us with your brokenness,
renew us with your poured out life,
empower us with your powerlessness,
that we may take root in your risen life
and bear fruit in your world.

**You are our life;
you are our hope;
you are our peace;
and we praise you. Amen.**

The bread of life is offered to us. **We feed on the bread of life with gratitude**
The cup of the newness of life is offered to us. **We drink of the cup with gratitude.**

The gifts of God for the people of God.
May we who share these gifts be found in Christ and Christ in us.
The bread of life
Keep us in eternal life
The blood of Christ
Keep us in eternal life

Taize song (sung while people are coming forward)
Hymn 714 Eat this bread, Drink this cup.

St Mary of the Angels 2022

<https://youtu.be/WHh81CBJ8cU?si=8O9wfX5PLuCGDOUh>

Prayer after communion

**God of truth and love who calls us and leads us into the future, make us a blessing for others.
Help us to see creation as being in the future and to love it into being.**

May we hold on to the hope You have planted in us,
believing the unbelievable,
reaching for the unattainable,
trusting the things beyond seeing and the things beyond hearing,

loving and living with compassion, offering hospitality and hope,
until the people who walk in darkness see the great light and are glad and free. **Amen**

Communion Hymn 531 Sent forth by God's blessing.

<https://youtu.be/PLp85eLlAlM?si=NHAp87MaorE3PxVg>

Omer Westendorf 2016

Dismissal

Ruth Burgess, Acorns, and Archangels (Edit. Ruth Burgess) Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. www.ionabooks.com Used with permission.

Send us out.

Send us out to seek wisdom.

Send us out in peace.

Send us out.

Send us out to do justice.

Send us out in hope.

Send us out.

Send us out to be loving.

Send us out in joy.

Hymn 778 Shalom to you now tMt video

https://youtu.be/liH_HdkWs74?si=bUv7FUEEtHvkGFDe

Pastoral Care Tips

One thing I learnt from a close shave with death after falling off a mountain and having a second chance at life was not to live in fear. Fear drives a wedge between people when building relationships. I also appreciate having a second chance at life and hope I live it better than previously.

I came across this cartoon from Leunig. It touches upon the need to not leave unfinished business. But that isn't always easy or realistic or possible. Sometimes, for our own sake, we need to walk away, in peace, to find peace and hand over some things to God.



Leunig – Used with permission.