

# The Good News of Easter ...

*... Jesus does not let us go!*

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*A sermon given on the Second Sunday of Easter, 27th April 2025 – by the Curate, the Revd Charlie Shefford, in Beverley Minster.*

*John 20:19-end*

Today, the Sunday after Easter, is traditionally called Low Sunday. Whilst at Theological College a priest told me this is because of the low attendance the Sunday after Easter - and although this isn't the reason, it's not far off. I think for many people, Lent is actually easier than Easter: the penitential nature of the 40 days of lent seem to fit more comfortably into our view of the world and of ourselves rather than the joyful nature of the 50 days of Eastertide.

And so I think it is easy to understand why many find the Sunday after Easter challenging: last week, we claimed that Christ is risen, that he had conquered the powers of sin and death - yet seemingly, life goes on as it had done before Easter Day; our loved ones who have departed from us, remain far from us; a quick glance at the news affirms that sin is very much still present in the world; even when we look at ourselves, our own lives, our hearts, our faith, these things tell us that life is not perfect, that sin has not loosened its grip since last Sunday.

This is not to say we feel this way every year in the weeks that follow Easter. Sometimes joy comes easy, but I'm sure we've all experienced an Easter season where it feels as though there is an empty space between the Easter proclamation of joy and the felt reality of grief, guilt, and hopelessness - an empty space that threatens to dismantle our fragile faith.

And this is why this morning's gospel is so comforting: in Thomas, there is a disciple who has walked this path before; we have a kindred spirit who also found himself stuck in that empty space; who, although he was one of the twelve disciples, was not with the others when Jesus first appeared; who, unlike the other disciples, did not find comfort in one another's company in the wake of the sorrow of the crucifixion, but preferred to be alone with his grief; and when the others sought him out to tell him their exciting news, he was not impressed - surely they succumbed to wishful thinking, but he would not be so easily taken in - even when they told him how they identified the Lord by the nail prints in his hands and the spear wound in his side, he would not be dissuaded - he knew what the imagination was capable of; seeing would not be enough for him; only if he put his finger into the nail prints and his hand into the spear wound would he be convinced.

Then a week later, Jesus does appear to Thomas in the same manner as he had to the other disciples, standing among them in a locked room. And just as he had spoken words of peace to the other disciples, he now speaks directly to Thomas with the same word of peace - speaking that word of peace into the empty space Thomas finds himself in. Jesus is saying to Thomas, *'Don't lose heart because of the world you see around you. Don't let its pain, its confusion, its broken promises steal your hope. Look to me. Trust in me: where the world falls short, I am faithful; where the world wounds, I heal; where the world disappoints, I remain.'*

He said this to Thomas then, and he says it to us today on Low Sunday.

And whether our hearts are heavy or hopeful, we have come here this morning, longing to trust that Jesus is risen and that because of him, everything has changed. And yet, doubts linger, too. Every one of us knows what it is to be disappointed, to feel small in a vast and hurting world, to wonder if we are enough. But the good news of Easter is that Jesus doesn't let us go when we feel like this. He remains when all else fails. He overcomes every fear, every failure, every wound. And he calls each of us by name, entrusting us with the work of his love and reconciliation.

So let us encourage one another with the hope we have been given. Let us dare to believe that beyond the sin and sorrow of this world, there is life, and that through believing, we may have life in his name.

# Reading Text

## John 20:19-end

<sup>19</sup> When 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.' <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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.' <sup>26</sup> 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.' <sup>27</sup> 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.' <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup> 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.'

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But 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.