

“The Grace to Believe God’s Promise of Easter”

Text: John 20:19-31

Most of us have probably marveled at the work of trapeze artists such as “The Flying Wallendas”. It is dangerous breathtaking work that they do. They are suspended in mid-air showing a combination of dexterity and calmness.

Many times a safety net is below the performers so that they can bounce back. With some of the higher caliber acts, this is not the case. In a way, the lives of Christians are like that, for we are on display. People say: “Look at how they love one another; they have the best marriage; their children are the best students; they make the best employees.” What happens when we fall? Our safety net that enables us to bounce back is what Jesus Christ has done.

That is the good news of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The first part of our text occurs on Easter Sunday evening and the second part a week later. It illustrates the grace of God exercised to people were still grasping this good news and its meaning for their lives. He does the same for us as-

**THE GRACE TO BELIEVE GOD’S PROMISE OF
EASTER**

- I. The good news of the resurrection changes us**
- II. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the goal
of our faith**

I.

A.1. It is rather interesting to note that while Jesus is no longer in the tomb, that his disciples are locked in a room. They were not at the point where most of us are at in this Easter season. We have the benefit of seeing everything that has happened through the pages of Scripture. Even they had been told much of what we know today, they still were not grasping it. These men would be changed people. So would the rest of Jesus' disciples outside of the twelve, or actually ten, minus Judas and Thomas.

The first words from Jesus' lips were: "Peace be with you!" The disciples needed that message. Certainly they must have been embarrassed for doubting. Jesus could have scolded them. In fact in St. Mark's gospel he does on another occasion, but not now. (Mark 16:14) The grace of God always leaves room for growth. David says in the psalms: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows our frame and he remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:13-14) The disciples needed peace and strength from Jesus.

2. When the disciples saw their wounded Lord, they finally got it. It was Jesus after all. The cross and grave could not hold Jesus. That is good news for you and me, the best news of all. Our sins deserve death. It is a price that none of us can pay, but Jesus did. The resurrected Jesus brings the greatest peace of all to us.

B.1. After extending a message of peace again, Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." This passage has always brought great comfort to me. While Jesus is speaking to his disciples, this word of comfort extends to his church of all time.

It is a privilege that Jesus extends to us. He could get the message of the gospel out in any way that he chooses. He chooses to use people to do it. We like David

said in the psalm have our frailties and weaknesses. We know what it means to have a Savior. Many times we think of sharing Christ as unnatural, it may become a burden. These words remind us the honor that is accorded to us.

We have this because of the Holy Spirit. It he who calls us to faith and gives us the words to speak. 50 days later, these frightened disciples would experience the Holy Spirit in his fullness. No longer would these men stay locked in rooms for fear of the Jews. They would go into the entire world and tell the good news about Jesus.

2. The message of forgiveness is one that we can bring to others. It is the announcement of what God has already accomplished in Jesus Christ. It is a message that the world of our day desperately needs to hear. Sins trouble many people. They feel guilty over what they have done. They are ashamed of their lives.

Into this same world comes the idea that somehow people can make up the difference between God and themselves. This is impossible. No kindly deeds, giving to charity or self-sacrifice can accomplish this. That is the way of the world, but no the way of God. The way of God is the way of Grace, which we know only in our Savior Jesus Christ. Because of this the disciples were changed and recreated and we are too.

II.

A.1. People refuse to believe that which they don't want to believe, in spite of the evidence. When explorers first went to Australia, they found a mammal which laid eggs, spent some time in the water, some on land; had a broad, flat tail, webbed feet, and a bill similar to a duck. Upon their return to England, they told about this animal, but many felt that it was a hoax. They returned to Australia and came back with a pelt, but still they were not believed. In spite of the evidence, people still didn't believe!

We have something similar in our text. Initially the disciples had not believed even though some saw the evidence, they just couldn't believe. Perhaps it was too good to be true. Maybe that is where Thomas was. The reports were astonishing; he wanted the evidence.

2. Thomas got what he was looking for, in the nail prints on Jesus' body. It was St. Augustine who said, "Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe in order that you will understand."

B.1. The faith of Thomas now comes to the rescue. He says, "My Lord and my God!" This is the first confession of Jesus in the way in the New Testament. There was no doubt in Thomas' mind now. He saw the evidence and believed.

You do the same thing. You have not seen the Lord Jesus appear before you as Thomas did. Through the pages of Scripture you see him and all that he accomplished for you and your salvation. When you come to the Lord's Table you see the bread and wine, which is the true body of blood of Jesus. In Baptism you see the water applied marking that child or adult one of God's very own.

2. Jesus commended for his confession of faith. Faith is not about what we can see and control, but rather about our trust in God's promises. We falter at times and other times move out boldly. Through a steady diet of word and sacrament that faith continues to grow and God operates through His grace in our lives.

Phillip II of Spain had a window built in his office so he could view the chapel next door. During his workday he could see the cross and the altar. His faith and the love of his Savior was the foundation of his work for the state. What God gives freely to us is the foundation of our faith that always holds to His promise of Easter. Amen.