

## **What Difference Has it Made?**

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20: 19-31

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### *1 Peter 1:3-9*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### *John 20: 19-31*

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.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 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.”

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.” 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.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 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.” Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 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.

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It has already been a week since our joyous Easter celebrations with excitement, sunrise, tulips, lilies, trumpet, a children’s egg hunt and all the special ways we celebrated the empty tomb, the resurrection of Jesus as Alleluia, Christ is Risen! It has already been a week since the world changed as Jesus triumphed over death, forgave us all, gave us the promise of eternal life and hope dispelled despair.

It has already been seven days since the Marys saw the angel and the earthquake roll away the stone and heard the words that Jesus was not there, that he had been raised from the dead, and they ran to share that incredibly good news.

We could expect that Jesus' eleven remaining disciples would react as faithfully and boldly as the Marys to share the news that God's promise, Jesus' promise, has been fulfilled, but they remain behind closed, locked doors and are living in fear. Having seen all that Jesus endured they must certainly wonder if they are to suffer the same fate. If God did not spare God's own son, what chance did they have? Likely this fear was also mingled with guilt and shame for their denials, rejection and abandonment of Jesus just when he needed them the most. Has Jesus' resurrection made a difference for them? They certainly do not seem changed, impacted, by the Risen One who has even appeared to them offering peace and not rebuke or anger. They have not found the courage or the strength to unlock the doors, unlock their fears, and go out to do the work of forgiveness that Jesus breathed into them through the Holy Spirit. If anything it seems that Jesus' resurrection has made them anxious, confused and withdrawn, not inspired or delighted. It is a week after Easter yet they are still living in a Good Friday world. We wonder why their lives, their actions, are not different-- radically or even simply different.

It has already been a week since our joyous Easter celebrations with excitement, sunrise, tulips, lilies, trumpet, a children's egg hunt and all the special ways we celebrated the empty tomb, the resurrection of Jesus as Alleluia, Christ is Risen! It has already been a week since the world changed as Jesus triumphed over death, forgave us all, gave us the promise of eternal life and hope dispelled despair. The questions we ask of the eleven disciples are questions we can also ask of ourselves.

What difference has the empty tomb of Christ's resurrection made for you in this past week? How is your life different? If you are like me, then your life today looks just about like it did last Sunday, and the Sunday before that, and before that, and before that. And the same for this country, for this world.

Why are *our* lives not different after Easter? Why are we still locked in the same place? Why are we not sharing and living the good news as the Marys did?

Perhaps we are like Thomas, needing proof that the good news of the resurrection makes a difference for everyone and for all time. "Even as we journey alongside the living Jesus and the resurrected Christ, even as we confess Jesus to be "our Lord and our God," even as we strive to become steadfast and courageous disciples, we may still want to poke the wounds.

In our lifetime, we may experience signs and wonders, the presence of the Holy Spirit, a glimpse of Christ or the face of God, but we may never find the absolute proof we seek. We will not get to poke the wounds. It remains a matter of our faith," that says, 'when I believe it, I will see it.'

Perhaps we also need time. This is the sage insight of Episcopal priest Michael Marsh<sup>ii</sup>, who in a sermon 'Get Out of the House,' in his 'Interrupting the Silence' blog wisely said that  
"Christ's resurrection is a big deal;  
The empty tomb is a life changing event;  
The resurrection does make a difference in our lives; and  
It also takes time.

Resurrection takes time. It is not a one-time event. It's something that we grow into. It's a process. It's a way of being and a life to be lived. By the grace of God we evolve into resurrected people through our relationships and the circumstances of our lives. God wastes nothing. Every

day we are stepping into the resurrected life. It's not always easy and some days are just plain hard.

I wonder if we sometimes come to Easter Sunday and the empty tomb expecting to wake up on Monday to a whole new life and world. I am guessing that you awoke on Easter Monday to the same life and world you had on Good Friday. I did. It's not because the resurrection failed or because Jesus didn't do "the Jesus thing" in our lives. It's because the Jesus thing takes time."

Time does change everything. It takes the facts, lets them sit, take root, be considered, be prayed about and reflected on, so the facts evolve into story and motivation and action.

In this week the disciples have been locked away in fear but we know they did not stay there. They needed some time to get their bearings, to spend time with Jesus, to rest in the peace that he had breathed upon them, even to go fishing once again before they set out for the ministries they were called and commissioned to do. Those who had been behind locked doors in fear of what could happen because of their relationship with Jesus went out teaching and preaching across the region and the known world, even as for some what had once been their worst fears became their realities. When their facts became their story and motivation and action, Jesus' resurrection was present and at work.

Time does change everything. It takes the facts, lets them sit, take root, be considered, be prayed about and reflected on. What is your story that Jesus' resurrection is writing in your life, the story that makes all the difference? Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Chris Mereschuck- <https://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional/poking-wounds/>

<sup>ii</sup> Michael K. Marsh- <https://interruptingthesilence.com/2017/04/24/get-out-of-the-house-a-sermon-on-john-2019-31/>