

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Happy Easter. He is risen, he is risen indeed Alleluia.

Yes I know, I know Easter was last week. And I am aware the Easter Lilies are gone. But I'm here to remind you Easter is not just a one day of the year thing. We are still in the Easter season for six more weeks, and more than that, we live in and through the resurrection every day of our lives.

Can you see you the difference Easter makes in your life and in the lives of others?

Consider, for 51 years Bob Edens was blind. He couldn't see a thing. His world was a black as a unplugged Television Screen. Even so, Bob Edens graduated from college, got married, had a daughter, and even coached little league baseball blind as a bat. Bob Edens felt his way through 5 decades of darkness, until low and behold... Bob Edens could see. A skilled surgeon performed a complicated operation and, for the first time, Bob Edens had sight. He found it overwhelming. He said, "I never would have dreamed that yellow is so...yellow." "I love seeing the Moon and the stars suspended in the night sky." "I cannot get over how the leaves turn colors and fall from the trees." "And oh how the sun rises and sunsets in my favorite colors."

The moral of the story, at least for today, is sometimes it takes the perspective of someone who has been blind that can now can see to point out that all the "seeing" folk have been living in blind spots and haven't noticed.

I'm sure you can remember where you were when you first learned to drive. Do you remember your father reminding you about the blind spot over your left shoulder? We all have blind spots. We have things we

miss in life all the time. Just because we have seen a rainbow 1000 times does not mean we have experienced it.

We all have blind spots, and for that reason, I will not assume that just because the church celebrated Easter last week, and just because you went to church and sang the songs and felt some of the joy, I will not assume that means you have seen and experienced the resurrected Jesus.

In John Chapter 20 God invites you, 8 days after Easter to come, touch and see... to experience Jesus for yourself, and most importantly, to believe on account of their witness.

Let us grant for a moment that the disciple John writes, “he himself needed no evidence”. That’s not quite right, because even he demanded to see the empty tomb.

Allow me to say, “the empty tomb is not the Easter Message.” The Easter message is that Jesus is alive and He appeared to the Disciples.

Yes it is true Jesus did say, “blessed are you who have not seen but have believed.” But just so we are clear that statement is not in support of ignorant unsupported faithfulness in the face of a lack of evidence. Understand, our faith is not based upon nothing. It is based first and foremost upon the resurrection, but it is also based upon the eye witness accounts of the risen Christ.

Do notice, John’s testimony is all about seeing. In John 1:14 it begins by saying “We have seen his Glory.” John does not say someone described Jesus to me. It says John fixes and fastens his eyes on Jesus. For in John’s Gospel it is all about seeing Jesus.... He just wants you to see through his eyes.

In John 1:29, John records “see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

In 1:46 Phillip invites Nathaniel to “come and see Jesus.”

In John 4:29 after the Samaritan woman met Jesus, John records her telling villagers “come see the man who told me everything I ever did!”

Two weeks ago in John’s Gospel, back on Palm Sunday, John records, “See, your king comes to you righteous, riding on a donkey.”

Finally, the Blind man in John 5 says it best, “I was blind but now I see.”

John wants you to see Jesus. 1 John Chapter 1 says,

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our^[a] joy may be complete.

Jesus, who claimed to be God himself, older than time, greater than death... The king of kings, the beginning and end, and resurrection and the life, can you see it? John wants your blind eyes to be opened. More than that, John wants you to see, and feel, and sense... John wants you to experience Jesus, maybe for the 1 time or for the 50th time, experience the crucified but risen Savior, Jesus. He is risen, he is risen indeed Alleluia.

That’s the invitation this morning.

You can try harder, put on glasses and squint, but that does not help you see him. You can act better, be more religious and more devout and that will not help you see him. Making resolutions and trying to be more sincere, those are all good things, and still, that don’t help you see Jesus. The only way you can see Jesus is for Jesus to be revealed to you.

Luckily, that is the goal of John's writings. John is recording these things so that you might have confidence, so that you might have joy, so that you might have life in his name.

It really is remarkable that on that evening while the disciples were locked away in the upper-room, Self-quarantined "for fear of the Jews," it was on that very occasion that Jesus showed up. It was definitely Jesus, no doubt about that, Jesus showed them his hands and his side. He even invited Thomas, not just to see, but to carry out the seemingly impossible test previously proposed by Thomas himself in verse 25.

"Jesus' response to Thomas' request was not to chastise him for a lack of faith but to mercifully give him exactly what he requested point for point."

In that instance, Thomas experienced Jesus, not just as the risen Lord, but as the One that forgives and the ONLY ONE that can deliver from unbelief, fear, and death.

One week after Easter, how about you? For Thomas he goes from "unbelief" on to confess "My Lord and my God." It is the boldest and most clear confession in the Gospel of John.

Similarly, I invite you to see and experience Jesus. If you want a savior from all your sin, a redeemer that renews and restores, open your eyes and see the risen and very much alive Jesus Christ.

John wants for you, through Thomas, to witness the resurrection.

He wants for you with the help of God, to say that I, on this day, will live in Him. He wants you to say that I, with the help of God, will never forsake Him. And He is my Lord and my God, no matter what.

John Chapter 20 is so crucial for our understanding, it is one of the few readings in the church calendar that comes up every year on the Second

Sunday of Easter. In it we learn something about the nature of faith, faith although based on signs, can with the help of God move beyond it.

This is one of my favorite texts because it is honest about the difficult nature of being a Christian today. But most importantly, it expresses the heart of God. To the afraid and the afflicted, Jesus breathed on them and said “peace be to you.” To broken sinners, Jesus says, “You are forgiven.”

Yet if the call of faith is to truly experience and see Jesus... receive the invitation, “receive the Holy Spirit. Stop doubting and believe!”

Let him be your savior. Trust him to do what he says he will do... to bring you peace, and most importantly, to bring you the forgiveness of sins, and ultimately, a life everlasting.

In the grace of God which surpasses all understanding trust your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus Amen.