

**Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit**  
**Worship at Home**  
**11<sup>th</sup> April 2021**  
**Easter 2      Trust and believe**

Last week, Easter Sunday, was a day of delight  
“He has risen! He has risen! Jesus is alive!”  
As the good news of what the women had  
experienced at the tomb had spread,  
as the appearances of Jesus were spoken of,  
the followers of Jesus were full of joy.  
Now, it is a week later, and the doubts are  
setting in.

“Can it be true?” Surely, Jesus can't be alive?  
Today we meet Thomas – Thomas Didymus,  
Thomas the twin, or as he is more usually called  
- Thomas the doubter.

Like Thomas, we have lived through some  
extraordinary times. The past 12 months have  
been difficult and we too may have doubts, our  
faith has been tested, but through his story we  
can find hope for the future, and rekindle the  
joy of Eastertide.

**Call to worship**

Jesus appeared to the disciples through locked  
doors. Today we are sat behind the locked doors  
of our homes, but Jesus can appear to us  
through our locked doors – and hearts.  
The doors of God's house are wide open this  
morning, so come, come, and enter in to  
worship our risen Lord. Amen.

**Collect of the day**

Faithful God,  
the strength of all who believe  
and the hope of all who doubt;  
may we, who have not seen, have faith  
and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Hymn 295    Jesus is Lord of all the earth**

<https://bit.ly/2Pmhpgc>

*Alleluia, alleluia,  
give thanks to the risen Lord,  
alleluia, alleluia,  
give praise to his name.*

- 1 Jesus is Lord of all the earth ;  
he is the King of creation :

- 2 Spread the good news o'er all the earth :  
Jesus has died and has risen :
- 3 We have been crucified with Christ ;  
now we shall live for ever :
- 4 Come, let us praise the living God,  
joyfully sing to our Saviour :

Donald Fishel (b. 1950)

**Prayers of adoration and confession**

Lord, we praise you because you died to be our  
Saviour,  
you rose again to be our Lord,  
you are alive and present among us,  
our true and living Lord.

We praise you for the peace and well-being  
that your presence brings into our lives,  
for the joy and hope for the future,  
wherever that takes us and whatever it brings.

We thank you for your appearances to the  
disciples,  
in the ordinary moments of their lives.  
We thank you for the way you have come  
to men and women throughout the ages  
and we thank you,  
that you come into our lives too.

Lord Jesus, you come full of grace to save us,  
But even though we believe this,  
we confess we like to keep you secret,  
we keep our faith hidden behind locked doors,

We confess our foolish attempts to live our own  
way,  
we confess that again and again we turn our  
back on you,  
we confess the lack of our faith and our struggle  
to believe.  
We confess we find it easier to follow others  
than to put our trust in you.

Lord Jesus, cast aside our doubts  
and fill us with the assurance  
that your love is eternal,  
and bring us to eternal peace with you,  
one where we believe and know completely  
that we are assured by you  
that our sins are forgiven.

We ask these prayers in the name of our

Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
who taught us to pray  
Our Father, who art in heaven ...

For the followers of Jesus, there was no immediate Easter joy. They are just filled with grief, they are full of fear – are their lives at risk too? Will they be arrested, imprisoned, even crucified as their Lord Jesus was?

So when reports come in that Jesus is alive, you can understand some of them not believing – until that moment they see with their very own eyes, their Lord and Master standing among them, showing his wounded hands and feet. Now the disciples can truly believe – all except one.

Thomas wasn't there. Let's hear his story ...

### **Bible Reading John 20:19-31**

#### **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

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."

#### **Jesus and Thomas**

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."

#### **The Purpose of This Book**

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.

#### **Word**

Have you ever missed something really special – perhaps through ill health or work commitments? My mum took seriously ill a few days before her only granddaughter's wedding, so couldn't attend. Seeing the photos and receiving cake did not help, in fact probably made it worse. When everyone else was full of the joy of what happened, mum felt left out and excluded.

Thomas must have felt like that. He was not there when Jesus appeared in that locked room on that first Easter Sunday, but he will have had to listen for a full week to their conversations as they recalled what they had seen, and what Jesus had said. And the more he listens, the more he feels left out, and the more he questions – how can this be?

Jesus was dead, crucified, his body placed in a tomb. Surely Joseph and Nicodemus would have noticed if Jesus was still alive when they prepared his body for burial. And how do you explain the stone rolled away – and no body for Mary and the other women to find.

I wonder, was Thomas missing that first night, because he was trying to find where Jesus was, trying to find who had taken him, and who was looking after him, whether he was dead or alive.

Thomas is labelled 'the doubter', the one who struggles to believe in Jesus, to accept who he is. But Thomas truly loved Jesus. On a previous occasion, when a messenger comes to tell Jesus that his friend Lazarus is dying, the disciples try to stop Jesus going because of the death threats he'd had. It is Thomas who says "OK. Let us also

go, that we may die with him”.

Those aren't the words of a non believer, those aren't the words of someone who doesn't care. Those are the words of someone who will follow Jesus to the end – even death. Thomas loved Jesus.

So, was Thomas seeking Jesus, whilst the other disciples are hiding in a locked room? Was Thomas the only one searching, whilst the others have given up hope? Was Thomas the only one to be out in the open, visible in the street, whilst his friends cower in the darkness, afraid to be observed?

Perhaps we do a disservice to Thomas by calling him the doubter. You see doubters often ask the best questions, and good questions will lead to good answers.

Have you ever been part of a conversation, where someone asks a question that you didn't dare ask, the answer to which, makes you think “Wow, that suddenly makes it all clear – now I understand.”

Thomas has grown up in a society where resurrection is not generally believed in, only the Pharisees would say this can happen, and even though he has 10 close friends saying “We have seen Jesus”, he still finds it hard to believe. He needs to see the evidence for himself – and that's exactly what he gets.

Jesus offers his hands, so that Thomas can touch and see the truth for himself. Jesus wasn't hard on Thomas, he doesn't rebuke him for his lack of faith. He doesn't tell him off like he does with Peter when he couldn't walk on water! Peter gets told 'You of little faith, why did you doubt'. Jesus offers Thomas peace - “Peace be with you” “Put your finger here, see my hands. Stop doubting. Believe”. Thomas exclaims. “My Lord and my God!” All doubt vanishes. Thomas knows, without any doubt whatsoever, that this is the risen Lord standing in front of him. Jesus is alive. Alleluia!

Belief is easy when the evidence is standing right in front of you. Which is why Jesus says to Thomas “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Those are comforting words for Christians today. It is very hard to believe when we live in such a visual society, images are always being taken, interviews recorded, and where truth is investigated by enquiry after enquiry. Yet we are bombarded by 'Fake News' and there's not much trust in things of a spiritual nature in our world today.

There is no peace, either. We live in a broken society; we each have our own troubles to bear. God can seem so far away. Doubts and fears can take over. But doubt can actually be good for us. Doubt makes us rethink, doubt can make us ask questions.

But, if we allow our doubt to become stubborn, we step backwards away from Jesus, and it can become a life-style where there is no faith, no hope, no peace. We need to take encouragement from Thomas, he didn't stay in his doubt, he allowed Jesus to bring him to belief. So don't take a step backwards.

Step forward in prayer, ask your questions, seek his words in the pages of your Bible, talk to those you know whose faith is stronger, and take encouragement from them. Do not doubt in silence, God will ensure your questions are answered. It is possible to believe without seeing Jesus in a physical form. Because through his death and resurrection, we each receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift for everyone, not just the disciples.

That Spirit is alive and within you. It may be just a small flicker of a flame at this moment, but just as Jesus breathed his Spirit upon his disciples, to give them a little courage and his peace, so you too can take hope that the same Spirit can sustain you, help you through the difficult times when you are doubting and fearful, help you to trust in God, and so that revived by the Spirit, you too can be a Witness to Christ and an ever present sign of the truth of the resurrection and the living Christ we know today. Amen.

### **Hymn 314 This joyful Eastertide**

<https://bit.ly/392kEtx>

- 1 This joyful Eastertide,  
what need is there for grieving?  
Cast all your cares aside

and be not unbelieving :  
*Come, share our Easter joy  
that death could not imprison,  
nor any power destroy,  
our Christ, who is arisen !*

- 2 No work for him is vain,  
no faith in him mistaken,  
for Easter makes it plain  
his kingdom is not shaken :
- 3 Then put your trust in Christ,  
in waking and in sleeping.  
His grace on earth sufficed ;  
he'll never quit his keeping :

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

The risen Lord comes to us in our doubt and fear, inviting us to leave with him our prayers and troubles.

Lord, we live in an uncertain world,  
a confused and broken world.

Lord, we pray for all those in our world who feel vulnerable today,

in war-torn communities,  
in places of drought and severe poverty,  
for those whose lives are so scarred or broken.

By your risen presence, fill them with hope.

Lord give them your peace,

**and accept our prayers.**

We live in a society of broken relationships,  
sadness and loneliness are abundant,  
made even worse through the pandemic.  
and many are suspicious and fearful.

Lord, we pray for all those feeling isolated,  
uncared for, unloved and abandoned,  
those who find daily living difficult to bear.

By your risen presence, fill them with confidence.

Lord give them your peace,

**and accept our prayers.**

Many families are living under great pressure;  
social and financial concerns create tension,  
family life is fragmented and fraught.

Lord we pray for all those who feel helpless,  
for whom everyday life is out of their control.

By your risen presence, fill them with courage.

Lord give them your peace,

**and accept our prayers.**

We live in a world needing to be made whole,

medical research has made huge  
advancements, but we still cannot heal those  
who seek wholeness of mind and body.

Lord, we pray for any today who are seeking  
healing, whether from weary and damaged  
souls or from physical illness bodies....

*(bring your personal prayers for those you know)*

By your risen presence, fill them with comfort.

Lord give them your peace,

**and accept our prayers.**

Our lives are full of joy and sorrow,  
at times we are full of light,  
but sometimes shrouded in darkness.

Lord, we pray that everything we do  
may radiate the joy of your Resurrection.

By your risen presence, fill us with joy.

Lord give us your peace,

**and accept our prayers. Amen.**

### **Hymn 707 Make me a channel of your peace**

<https://bit.ly/393NRVi>

- 1 Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me bring your love ;  
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord ;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you :

*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console ;  
to be understood as to understand ;  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

- 2 Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope ;  
where there is darkness, only light ;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy :

*Refrain*

- 3 Make me a channel of your peace.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving unto all that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997)

### **Blessing**

Jesus said to them,

“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”.

Go out now, in the power of that same Spirit.

And may the Peace of the Lord be with each  
one of you, today and always. Amen.

Kathy Lowrie