Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

He is risen! This is a stark reminder we should have throughout the Easter season and really every week when we come to celebrate as Christ touches us in the bread as the real presence of is Christ is put in our hand. This gives us strength to share God’s word and keeps us in God’s grace. Filled with the Holy Spirit that Jesus breathed on his disciples that we received in our baptism we ask for forgiveness and find our way to forgive others. Part of this is to also pass the peace, the peace which exceeds all human understanding. It helps to hear the story this Second Sunday of Easter where we hear about the mystery of Jesus and his relationship with his disciples where Jesus brings them peace as God very’s Spirit also nurtures their faith. We hear how Jesus comes to be in the midst of the disciples the first day of the week – which is Sunday, which is considered the eighth day. In the New Testament, the significance of the eighth day is day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, which can be understood as the "eighth day" following the Sabbath. This event marks the dawn of a new creation and the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. The resurrection is a hinge in history that inaugurates the new covenant, offering believers a foretaste of eternal life and the ultimate restoration of all things. The "eighth day" became a symbol of the new creation and the hope of resurrection life, distinguishing the Christian community's worship from the Jewish Sabbath observance and points to the ultimate consummation of God's kingdom. It can symbolize a state of eternity, where the cycles of time are transcended, and as believers we enter into the fullness of God's rest and glory. [Revelation 21:5](https://biblehub.com/revelation/21-5.htm) declares, "Behold, I am making all things new," which captures the essence of the eighth day as the culmination of God's redemptive work. The significance of the eighth day in the Bible encompasses themes of covenant, new beginnings, and eschatological fulfillment. It serves as a powerful symbol of God's ongoing work in creation and redemption, inviting believers to participate in the hope and promise of a renewed creation. This day of Jesus resurrection is the backdrop for Jesus offering the disciples peace, showing them his hands and side which results in them going from fear to rejoicing.

We have all heard the name doubting Thomas, which I believe is based on the fact Thomas stated he would not believe he is seeing the Lord unless he sees the mark of the nails in his hands, and he can put his finger in the mark of the nails and his hand in Jesus side. Here is the thing. I believe and I think you will agree with me, Thomas, like us are much more than any doubts he may have. Yes, he is also a person filled with a deep abiding faith. Thomas didn’t huddle in fear with the apostles in a locked room. Thomas has made his way out into the world. Isn’t it the other Apostles who are living in fear banded together to keep the outside world at bay as doubters, not trusting in Christ knowing whatever happened they would be okay?  We can identify with Thomas as we our own struggles and understanding that even those who walk closely with Jesus have their doubts. By recognizing Thomas’s identity, we can relate to his human experience—filled with faith, fear, and a thirst for certainty. Any doubts Thomas or we have are not a sign of weakness. Instead, these can be an invitation to experience a deeper faith and understanding. Thomas teaches us that honest questioning can lead to profound revelations. Jesus fulfills Thomas’s request and shows Tomas his wounds and again says “Peace be with you.” Once Thomas has seen Jesus nails wounds in his hands and feet and the wounds in his side Thomas boldly states one of the most powerful and concise creeds in all of scripture: “My Lord and my God!” This bold affirmation signifies a turning point not just for Thomas but for all believers. It illustrates how faith can be ignited, even from a place of skepticism. Together, we see that trust in Christ can flourish from sincere questioning. The story of Thomas shows the importance of being honest in our faith, seeking understanding, and recognizing that transformation can lead to remarkable things. So let’s continue to encourage one another and remember—we are not alone in our doubts or our journeys. Together, we can grow and strengthen our faith in the One who knows us as we walk together in faith, just as Thomas and the other disciples did, trusting that Jesus meets us in our inquiries, assures us in our journeys, and sends us forth to witness with a message of hope and love to share with the world. Peter and the apostles affirm their belief in Christ at significant risk to themselves and their families. The Spirit is at work, giving ordinary, fearful doubting people extraordinary boldness to declare the core beliefs of Christian faith. God works in surprising ways, through unexpected people, to share the good news of Easter. With the Spirit’s help, we are part of this great cloud of witnesses.

Scripture shows us the disciples and by extension ourselves that we mess up, more than just once. That is why we continue to confess our sins. Jesus understands our weaknesses but accepts us. We do not choose Christ; Christ chooses us and accepts us for who we are. In the hours leading to Jesus’ crucifixion his disciples betray him and deny him. Yet, Jesus’ first words to the disciples after his death show Jesus is not angry. Jesus is not judgmental. Jesus understands our weakness-he died because of our weakness. Instead, Jesus comes among them and declares: “Peace be with you.” Jesus' peace is not merely the absence of conflict or turmoil but a deep, abiding sense of well-being and reconciliation with God and tells them the Father has sent him as he sends them. Can we raise to this level of forgiveness for others who have wronged us? Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. This is how healing and reconciliation occur. Be intentional today when we share God’s peace with others. Can we share God’s peace with these people? Even after his violent death, Jesus wants peace for the disciples. Jesus' peace is not merely the absence of conflict or turmoil but because of his love for them and knowing that being sent is not going to be easy, they will not always be well received and most suffered death because of their faith yet their future with belief in Christ holds a deep, abiding sense of well-being and reconciliation with God. Jesus' peace is not merely the absence of conflict or turmoil but a deep, abiding sense of well-being and reconciliation with God.

To believe in John (I believes) means to have faith, to trust in something greater than ourselves. It is not an intellectual or doctrinal term but it is where one believes they also have trust and faith in something and is a covenant reconciliation with God. Seeing is believing although those are blessed that believe without seein. (Carl Sagan, Astrologist.) It informs how we lead our lives where as Christians we believe in Chrit and therefore conform our lives to Christ and is a call to action. In the meantime we carry out God’s mission in the world by feeding the hungry, and supporting the homeless while they are waiting to get new housing plus many other things we do individually and collectively. Because he is risen, we too will be risen! To believe in John (I believes) means to have faith, to trust in something greater than ourselves. It is not an intellectual or doctrinal term but it is where one believes they also have trust and faith in something and is a covenant reconciliation with God. Seeing is believing It informs how we lead our lives where as Christians we believe in Chrit and therefore conform our lives to Christ and is a call to action. In the meantime we carry out God’s mission in the world by feeding the hungry, and supporting the homeless while they are waiting to get new housing plus many other things we do individually and collectively. Because he is risen, we too will be risen!

To believe in John **John 3:16 (nrsvue) *16****“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

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John tells us his motivation for writing his book which depicts signs (which other writers call miracles) and many other signs that are not in his book when he tells us in verse John 20:30-31:

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 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. Believe and act! Amen.