

John's Gospel is illuminating the need for peace. Of course, first, there is turmoil; especially with the disciples. Look at Thomas' actions. For centuries, he has been known as Doubting Thomas. Realistically Thomas was searching for direction.

The way that I relate to Thomas is by seeing him as someone who wishes to know the plan, how the disciples are going to continue their ministry of teaching. Perhaps he is just not a wanderer by nature. Our Gospel text today is the beginning of the end. It is a story of love and truth. Jesus shows love to the disciples from the moment he enters this scene. In this passage, they finally recognize Jesus for who is: master and God. He is the one who rules their lives.¹

This all happens on the Lord's day. The time of this occurrence is important. It is on the Lord's Day, yet it is night. In my mind, I imagine a nearly dark room with tired disciples. [They had locked the door, because they were afraid of the Jews, their own people. These are men of the Jewish faith. They were really afraid of the evil that killed Jesus.]² I can sense the unease: you know the meetings where it is awkward and you feel all the air went out of the room. You are tugging at your collar, the room is stuffy and hot. To me, living into this uncertainty would be the opposite of peace. As such, when Jesus arrives to greet his disciples, he is coming to bring them new direction in their lives.³ And first thing, Jesus brings peace to Thomas. In truth, he brings peace to all of the disciples and to us.

Jesus wishes peace upon those who are gathered. Peace allows room for the Holy Spirit.⁴ At the same time, if we are searching for the type of peace present with the Disciples, we must know that it begins and continues with the Holy Spirit.⁵

There is a great deal of confusion for Thomas. However, I prefer to think of Thomas as a case study. He is no different than many of us in this room, he wants more tangible proof that the one he has followed so long has died and been resurrected. After all, the brutality of the crucifixion was, absolutely, horrific.⁶

Jesus arrives, and is known in John's gospel as the light of the world. Imagine being in that dark room when such light enters. Remember that Thomas began to doubt before Jesus came into the room. I cannot totally blame Thomas: the disciples carried unprecedented news with them.

Luckily, we have an understanding Lord and Savior. His words to Thomas are full of direction and hope. Jesus is fortifying his future leaders.

He knows they need direction in order to carry out his mission. The mission that Jesus gives in John is simple: peace. We are at peace with the Holy Spirit, when we feel God's presence surrounding us.⁷

¹ Wright, N.T. (2004). *John for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. You see, as N.T. Wright notes, "Feet are very basic things: not pretty, not ugly, just basic."

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³ Lewis, K.M. (2014). *Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentary: John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

⁴ Doyle, A. (2022). <http://hitchhikingthebible.blogspot.com/2013/04/second-sunday-of-easter-year-c.html>

⁵ For a full reflection on the Holy Spirit, please see Fr. Roman's blog. The Holy Spirit can bring peace to the anxious.

<https://saintdunstons.org/fr-romans-blog/does-scripture-say-anything-about-the-holy-spirit-other-than-at-pentecost/>

⁶ My thoughts, Yet, sometimes, when the light is turned on in the morning, we have to let our eyes adjust. This is also true of the good things in our midst. for a theological perspective go to Wright, N.T. (2004). *John for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. You see, as N.T. Wright notes, "Feet are very basic things: not pretty, not ugly, just basic."

⁷ Lewis, K.M. (2014). *Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentary: John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

I can feel the temperature in the room go down as the disciples imagine Jesus' new life being breathed upon them. They are a part of a new world view: they must leave their safe bubble and begin Jesus' ministry in a way they never imagined.

The disciples' reaction is not unlike our own to new ideas: when we talk about church growth the questions of scarcity often arise. Will there be enough resources for all of us? Will the priest have enough time for more members in their flocks? How can we feel God's peace in a world with so much pain?

The scripture today is clear: by sharing God's peace with each other using The Holy Spirit.⁸

We must let go of our past selves if we are desiring to move forward. This text is a call to bravery.⁹

[We find Christ's peace by trusting, the Greek word for "believe" in our text is nuanced. The word could well mean believing. It could also mean trusting.

Therefore, it is hard to know the extent of Thomas' unbelief. Was it a lack of trust in Christ's divinity, or an unbelief in the circumstances? Whichever one is true, it is not hard to imagine that there was a great deal of distress.]¹⁰

Christ's peace is missing for us when we are unable to see God in the ordinary, and in the testimonies surrounding us. Think of what is happening in our world.¹¹ The world is expanding, changing, and values are always shifting. As Christians we are called to remain steadfast to our beliefs, while adapting to new methods of sharing the good news. It is with this strength that we are able to connect to others outside of our church.¹²

Once we see exactly who Jesus is in our lives, the next step is to see his vision for the future.¹³ Through our baptism, we are part of the priesthood of all believers. When the church was in the early stages, it was common for a priest to be a jack-of-all-trades. However, now, as we read the account of Christ coming and wishing peace to his disciples, I think that we all can see we cannot be all things to all people. Our faith is unique to our own identity. Some people can not see and instantly believe. Some people can see and believe.

⁸ Lewis, K.M. (2014). *Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentary: John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

⁹ Doyle, A. (2022). <http://hitchhikingthebible.blogspot.com/2013/04/second-sunday-of-easter-year-c.html>

¹⁰ Large parts of this section were left out at 9:00 a.m. to save time. Schreiner-Such, R. (2022). Commentary on John 20:19-31.

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-of-easter-3/commentary-on-john-2019-31-18>

¹¹ or in our diocese: a push toward church planting and spiritual growth. Bishop Doyle is very excited about the possible mission field: the unchurched. From having heard him speak recently a few times, he seems, at least to this curate, to be strengthened by his flock - the entire Diocese of Texas.

¹² My thoughts: Going back to Bishop Doyle's vision for the diocese, part of what he told us weeks ago was his intention to connect more people with a faith in Christ. Doyle, A. (2022).

<http://hitchhikingthebible.blogspot.com/2013/04/second-sunday-of-easter-year-c.html>

¹³ This means we have to be active in our faith. In our text, Jesus wants to fill our spiritual buckets to the brim, however, he wants us to then share that faith with others. When we do this, we do not focus on ourselves, rather, we focus on the mission ahead of us.

Some of us take more time to know the Lord. We are called to strengthen our faith so that we can share it with others. Jesus begins by wishing us peace and ends with a blessing. This is not such a bad prospect.¹⁴

It is good for us to be active in our faith. As we see in Thomas, in times of doubt, Jesus fills him with peace and love. In turn, we need the peace of Jesus to focus on the mission ahead of us.

This means we have to be active in our faith. In our scripture, Jesus wants to fill our spiritual buckets to the brim. He also wants us to get out of that small dark room. Jesus desires for us to share our faith with others. When we do this, we do not focus on ourselves, rather, we focus on the mission ahead of us.

One of my colleagues in the ministry put it nicely: there are people who need an ear to talk about God, and I've got two. Making ourselves available is exactly what Christ wants, after all that is what Thomas did. What the gospel writer does not tell us is if Thomas actually touched Jesus' wounds. I am inclined to think that he did not.

It is my perception that instead, he simply believed without touch. We see through Thomas' example that we can experience Jesus' presence without physically feeling the proof. To be members of the church, our faith is more than sufficient. Jesus is calling his disciples, and us, to continue his ministry. There are still people who need healing, teaching, and of course guidance. The Holy Spirit will be part of their strength and their peace.¹⁵

We recognize Jesus is Lord and ruler of our hearts. There are hymns that are hundreds of years old, new praise songs, and countless theologians who will tell you this fact. It is essential that we recognize that we are not the ones driving our world or even our lives.¹⁶ This is the trap that Thomas falls into. He believes in his plans that are necessary to move forward in ministry. I certainly have enough confidence to believe in my own plans, however, I am most in tune with God when I let him lead the way.

We are called to be Christ's disciples. We are called to bring peace into the world. That calling starts with our relationship with Christ, is filled by the Spirit, and spread outward.

¹⁴ Herbert, G. (1981). *The Country Parson*. Chapter IV. The Parson's Knowledge. New York: Paulist Press. pp.58-59 This was written in the 17th century and republished.

¹⁵ Schreiner-Such, R. (2022). Commentary on John 20:19-31.

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-of-easter-3/commentary-on-john-2019-31-18>

¹⁶ Doyle, A. (2022). <http://hitchhikingthebible.blogspot.com/2013/04/second-sunday-of-easter-year-c.html>