

# Saint Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church

Easter 2, April 24, 2022

## READINGS:

Acts 5:27-32

Psalm 150

Revelation 1:4-8

John 20:19-31

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Hallelujah! ... Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!"

Jews in Jesus' time would have known the words of psalm 150 - they would have grown up reciting them. But when our gospel for today opens, Jesus' disciples were not feeling like shouting "Hallelujah," no matter what the psalm says. They were sad, and they were afraid.

Fear was in the locked room where they were hiding from the Jews that first Easter evening. Fear, and ten of the remaining eleven disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. For some reason, Thomas was not there.

Earlier in the day, Mary Magdalene had come running to them to tell them she had seen the Lord at his empty tomb, and that he was ALIVE.

"I have seen the Lord," she announces. She is sure. The disciples are not. They can't get their heads around the possibility of what she is telling them.

They can't believe what they are told - what they HEAR. They need to SEE for themselves.

Sometimes, we all need to see for ourselves.

I remember one of those times from my life very clearly, even though it was many years ago. The story reminds me just a little of Mary's conversation with the disciples!

My nephew Scotty was about four years old. His dad (my next younger brother Tom) and I had decided to take him down to the Las Vegas Wash to hunt for crawdads. We grew up in Wyoming catching crawdads with bites of bologna tied onto pieces of string. They look like tiny lobsters, and we thought Scotty would like looking for them, even if we didn't find any.

At the Wash, Tom and I started turning over rocks in the shallow water to look for the crawdads. Scotty was wading along behind us, and pretty soon we heard him call, "I see one!"

We had not seen any, and we did NOT think Scotty really had, either. So, without looking to see, we called back to him, "Go get him, Scooter - that's the way!"

It was quiet for a minute or so, and then Scotty said again, "I SEE one!"

"Go get him, kid," we encouraged, still without looking.

This time the silence was longer, and then Scotty said in a very strange tone of voice, "But I REALLY DO see one!"

THEN we turned to see, and found that Scotty really DID see one. It was quite a big one, and it was hanging by one claw from his middle finger!

The disciples needed to see for themselves, and Jesus came to show them!

No locked door could keep him away from them anymore.

"Peace be with you," he said to them, and he showed them his hands and his side.

It's ME - really Me - take a good look, and SEE!!!!

John says the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Mary Magdalene is right - rabbi Jesus IS alive!

The disciples don't have to be afraid of their sins anymore. They don't have to fear death anymore.

John says that Jesus continues, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

With those words, he sends them to make future generations of disciples. He sends them to bring his peace to the world. Jesus sends them to teach others everything he has taught them. He sends them to be joyful, knowing that he is really ALIVE!

And he breathes on the disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

In preparing for this sermon, I read a piece by the Reverend Peter Marty. He is a well-known Lutheran pastor and author, and the editor of The Christian Century magazine. He tells John's story in a little different way. He says:

Jesus breathed on those disciples, and they inhaled. "Okay, men" (and they probably were all men), Jesus says, "Inhale again. And with this next breath, I am going to infuse you with the power and the will to forgive other people. It's quite the gift, especially if you will put it to work. But first you must inhale, and then that breath will become a true part of you."

The disciples don't have to do the work Jesus has given them alone! He BREATHES the Spirit on them - the Spirit he has already told them will teach them everything and remind them of all he has said to them.

And Thomas misses it all!

When the other disciples tell him THEY have seen the Lord, he reacts the same way they reacted to Mary's announcement!

They ARE sure, now. He is NOT.

He can't believe what he is told. He just needs to SEE for himself. He wants nothing for himself that the other disciples have not already seen for themselves.

And again, Jesus comes to his disciples!

"Peace be with you," he says to them again. To Thomas, he says, "...see my hands...reach out your hand and put it in my side."

It's ME - really Me - take a good look, and SEE!!!!

I love Thomas.

He looks. Nowhere in the Gospel for today does it say he does in fact touch Jesus' wounds. But he sees, and he is sure, and he says only "My Lord and my God." Thomas may have needed to see for himself, but he knew Jesus as Lord and God when HE saw him, and he said so right away!

And Jesus has something to say, too, about those who will not get to SEE him!

John tells us he blesses those whose faith must rely on his WORDS and not his physical appearance - those who will believe in him by hearing. Disciples like us!

WE have not missed anything!

We know Jesus lives!

We have received the same spirit Jesus breathed on the first disciples in our baptism!

So people of God, on this second Sunday of our Easter season, do what Peter Marty suggests.  
Inhale!

Inhale the power of the Spirit to tell the Good News, as Peter told it before the high priest's council in today's lesson from Acts.

People of God, inhale!

Inhale the power of the Spirit, and have strength to serve God by loving, caring for and forgiving his people.

People of God, inhale!

Inhale, even just a little, and rejoice that Jesus who died is ALIVE again and will come with the clouds at the end of time as we read today from the book of Revelation!

People of God, INHALE!

Hear the voice of Jesus saying in your heart, "Peace be with you."

It's me - REALLY!

And shout with the writer of today's psalm, "Hallelujah! ... Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!"

Happy Easter!

Amen.