

Second Sunday of Easter – 2026

Acts 5:29-42

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

There are a number of biblical books that have a thesis, a major statement which the author wants to convey with magnum force to his audience. The book of Romans has one of the most familiar theses. St. Paul writes: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Romans 1:16-17). St. Luke writes his gospel account of the Lord Christ to a fellow name Theophilus and Luke tells him that he has “written an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3). St. Mark’s favorite word in his gospel account is “immediately.” Everything happens “immediately” in the Gospel of Mark, giving it a breathless pace, a pressing urgency to the events surrounding our Lord.

St. John’s thesis is in view this morning. John delivers a statement that could easily encompass the whole of Scripture. John’s thesis is lucid, direct, and compact. St. John’s personal remark to you is a treasure, a jewel. It comes at the climax of a resurrection episode, an episode which grips the heart and opens one’s eyes to see this Divine Service for what it is. Here it is: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). He could have put that statement anywhere. He chose to put it here, at the crowning moment of Thomas’ confession and Jesus’ statement about us who don’t see and yet believe. Why? Why did John put his thesis here?

Thomas was emotional. He seems angry, bitter, and deeply troubled. Can you relate? How many of you have ever gone through a dark time, a dark spiritual episode, a time when confusion gripped your heart like an eagle holding a mouse in its talons. Thomas’ heart had soared as he heard the Lord teach. Thomas’ eyes were enlightened by the miracles, captivated by the manner of Jesus’ ministry to the forgotten, the tenderness with which the Lord extended divine mercy to sinners. Faith has love within it. Hope has love within it. Trust has love within it. Thomas was a believer. Faith, hope and trust animated Thomas’ heart and it was all anchored in Christ, exactly where it belonged. And Good Friday wrecked Thomas. Confusion was on the throne. Death was on the throne. The tomb was Thomas’ king. The wounds had been extreme. The suffering, the shame, the mockery – it had all been extreme. Thomas himself had suffered a beatdown as he witnessed Christ crucified. Spiritual shock; Thomas’ heart was blistered, his faith was in a state of vertigo; Thomas didn’t know which side was up.

We’re emotional creatures. Built by God, we are emotional. Not all our emotions serve us well. Trying to harness our emotions, always being in control, none of us have that kind of mastery. How many of you have ever felt like broken glass on the inside? How many of you have ever had a storm cloud hanging over you, a storm that doesn’t move? How many of you have had times when the most beautiful music is discordant in your ears, when laughter is a sound that seems deliberately sent to callously call attention to your pain? Thomas... where was he? He

rejected his brothers' witness. "We have seen the Lord" (John 20:25). Those men he most trusted, who shared his life and he theirs, who were men of gravitas and integrity – Thomas told them to take a flying leap. "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe" (John 20:25).

I don't know why, but I know that Thomas was meant *not* to see the Lord the first time. Nobody set Thomas up. This event was organic, human, an unfolding of honest weakness. Who understands us more than Christ. Thomas was supremely important to our Lord. St. John, as he recounts this episode, gives us no insight into our Lord's demeanor when He spoke directly to Thomas. It's easy for me to see Jesus as firm yet understanding. "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it into my side. Do not disbelieve but believe" (John 20:27). Firm, yet understanding – Jesus looks directly into our eyes and calls faith out of the heart. Peter, do you love me? Firm, yet understanding – Jesus reminded Peter of his three-fold denial on the night when the Lord was arrested, asking Peter, at a later juncture, three times "do you love me?" And you? Have you ever had to be corrected? Have you ever abandoned the clear and sacred Word of God? Have you ever pursued your own path, have you fed your sinful nature, have you doubted the goodness of God, the veracity of Christianity, the purpose of obedience? Firm, yet understanding – Jesus returns us to the path.

Thomas' senseless denial is swallowed up in the glory of Christ's wounds: "My Lord and my God." Thomas' blistered heart swells with the majesty of a crucified and risen Savior: "My Lord and my God." The previously conflicted Thomas gives voice to the clearest confession of faith found in the Gospel according to John: "My Lord and my God." It is the highest Christology found in Scripture: "My Lord and my God." Yes, this is the Word made flesh. Yes, this is I AM. Death is beneath His feet. Sin and hell are defeated. Life is the Victor. And we have the privilege to echo the words of Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" Christ's word pulls faith out of the heart, places it on our lips, and we confess: "My Lord and my God." Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39). Give to those who need your aid (Luke 6:38). Speak the truth in Love (Ephesians 4:15). My Lord and my God. Look for opportunities to serve others (Galatians 5:13). Defend the weak, the unborn, the neighbor in need (Proverbs 31:8-9). Forgive those who sin against you (Ephesians 4:32). My Lord and my God. Do all in your power to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Be mindful that God has made you holy and guard it (Proverbs 4:23). Bear witness to the truth of Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:8). My Lord and my God.

This inspired Word, this glorious and vivifying and divine Word has been given to you for you to believe. Life is in this Word. You need this life, a life beyond the marvel of biology, which is truly fabulous. But people die without the life of Christ and that is tragic. Biology ends. Christ's life, the life that is in His name, does not end. He is risen. There is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). John's thesis is to be seared in your heart. John's thesis is the joy of Christianity, the herald of Christ's own work, the assurance that the Holy Spirit animates this divine assembly. It comes on the heels of Jesus speaking about you. To Thomas, and to you, our Lord said: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed" (John 20:29).

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