

**Sermon: “The transformative power of resurrection life”**

(Acts 2: 14a, 22-32; John 20: 19-31)

*May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable to the Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.*

The connection between today’s two lectionary passages is that the resurrection is not simply one event among many. The resurrection of Jesus is the reality that shapes everything else. It is an entry way for new life into old fears. It is a power that reshapes people from the inside out. And nowhere is this more vividly seen than in Peter and Thomas, whose stories reveal how resurrection life can meet us precisely in those moments when fear closes doors, when failure silences us, when doubt isolates us, and when the future feels uncertain.

The transformative power of Christ’s love is clearly demonstrated in the lives of Peter and Thomas. They were so different, these two men, but they had encounters with the resurrected Jesus that reshaped their identities, faith and purpose.

Our gospel passage begins with the description of the disciples hiding in fear behind locked doors. Peter was amongst those disciples. His transformation began in failure. The various gospel stories portray Peter, prior to Jesus’ death and resurrection, as bold, impulsive and deeply devoted to Jesus, but also deeply flawed. Despite his confident declaration

that he would never abandon Jesus, he denied his Lord three times during the course of the evening before the crucifixion. And he wept bitterly when he remembered Jesus' words to him.

Jesus had predicted to Peter his denial, but he also said to Peter, "I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers and sisters." Even before Peter failed, Christ's love anticipated and interceded for him.

Christ's love did not condemn Peter but restored him. According to the gospel of Mark, the risen Jesus appeared specifically to Peter. Luke records the angel saying to the women who discovered the empty tomb that they were to tell Jesus' disciples *and Peter* to meet Jesus in Galilee.

And on the shore of Lake Galilee, Jesus personally reinstated Peter as he asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" The repeated question was not an interrogation but an invitation to step back into his calling. Resurrection life did not erase Peter's past; it redeemed it. His failure became the place where grace took root. What emerged was a different kind of courage that was not the loud confidence of self-assurance, but the steady boldness of one who has been forgiven. Peter became a rock, not because he was always strong, but because resurrection life made him so.

Each affirmation from Peter reversed a denial, becoming a moment of healing. Jesus' love for Peter restored his identity and gave him purpose.

Rather than putting him aside, Jesus entrusted Peter with leadership, charging him to “feed my sheep.”

Receiving Christ’s love for him, Peter’s shame was transformed into experiencing Christ’s forgiveness, his fear was transformed into boldness, and from being a failure, he became the foundational leader of the early Church, spreading the message of Christ and demonstrating that divine love redeems and commissions even those who fall hard.

In today’s passage from Acts 2, we see Peter, who was once afraid and denied Jesus, now standing publicly and proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah. The same man who hid is now preaching boldly.

And then we have Thomas, whose story is read every year on the second Sunday in Easter. Unlike Peter, Thomas did not wrestle with failure but rather with doubt. He refused to believe without tangible proof. When the other disciples proclaimed that Jesus had risen, Thomas insisted that he must see and touch Jesus’ wounds to believe. His scepticism is often remembered as weakness, but it is also deeply honest, as Thomas refused to settle for second-hand faith. He longed for a real encounter. And when Jesus appeared, he did not reject Thomas’ doubt but met it directly, offering his wounds as evidence and inviting Thomas to touch them.

In that moment, doubt is not shamed, but it is transformed. Christ’s love met Thomas exactly at the point of his struggle. His compassionate

invitation led Thomas to spontaneously utter one of the strongest declarations of faith in the Gospels, when he exclaimed “My Lord and my God!” The clearest affirmation of Jesus’ divinity in the Gospels came from this former doubter.

Resurrection life does not bypass questioning, but it enters it and brings it to fulfilment. Thomas’ doubting was not rebellion but a longing for certainty. Experiencing Christ’s love for him, Thomas’ doubt was transformed into conviction, his scepticism to worship, and his uncertainty became bold proclamation. Church tradition says that Thomas later became a missionary. Currently, there are about six million Christians of Indian origin who are often referred to as Saint Thomas Christians. They trace the origins of their faith to the evangelistic activity of Thomas the Apostle in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

The examples of Peter and Thomas resonate because they reflect universal human experiences of failure, doubt, fear and the longing for restoration. Their lives suggest that transformation does not come from one’s personal strength, but from being encountered and changed by a love that refuses to give up on us. From Peter we learn that failure is not final; Thomas reminds us that doubt is not disqualifying. In both cases, the risen Christ met them where they were and not where they should have been.

Eastertide celebrates the Resurrection of Christ and its consequences for the original disciples and followers of Jesus, and for us. With opened hearts and minds, Thomas and Peter experienced the transformative power of

resurrection life in their lives. Our loving God invites us to experience this transformative power of resurrection life in our lives, too.