

Grace to you and peace from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. From God the Father who accepted His payment for our sins. And from God the Holy Spirit who, by God's grace lives in you.

The word of God that was given by inspiration to John for today is from 20:19-31.

**"Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." 20 When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained." 24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."**

So far our text. Dear fellow redeemed.

This past Sunday the Lewiston Tribune published a letter to the editor from a man who made many accretions concerning Jesus rising from the dead. Two of the main points were that Jesus really didn't rise bodily; instead He was a spirit or ghost of sorts. The other is that the writer or writers of the Scriptures were so far removed from the actual record that they couldn't know the facts of the situation.

This type of message is nothing new. These errors go back to the early church and have caused many to stumble through teachings such as this. If these accusations were true, it would indeed be a terrible situation for all of mankind. Indeed, the most pitiable of all are you and I because of our hope in Jesus' bodily resurrection.

And who would know that better than Jesus Himself? Jesus preached the resurrection from the dead specifically so that we would know that the payment for our sins was accepted by the Father. Jesus also preached the resurrection so that we would know we would have everlasting life with Him in heaven for those who believe.

But He our loving God yet again has had mercy on all of us by showing Himself as having risen from the dead. Not as a ghost or spirit, but in a true glorified body. As I have said and will continue to say, our flesh is susceptible to these types of claims. We read or hear about them and they can eat away at us.

They might make us wonder at times if Jesus truly rose bodily from the grave. But let's see what proofs the Lord has supplied for us in His word. Not only to strengthen us, but so that we may continue to have our hope in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and our hope of eternal life with Him. If you do have doubts or if you know someone with doubts our Lord says in our text, **“Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”**

For those found in our text for today we unfortunately find them in a situation where instead of being out proclaiming the resurrection of the savior which they had testified to them by the woman who met Jesus in the garden. Instead they are held up in a locked room out of fear.

The Jews were so angry that Jesus wasn't found in the tomb even after posting a guard at the entrance to the tomb. Their continued anger towards Jesus went so far that they bribed the guards and told them to report that the followers of Jesus came and stole the body away in case the report that He had risen from the dead would be circulated.

The fact that the Jews remembered this and took pains to stop it is amazing in comparison to the attitude that the very followers of Jesus were taking. They actually got to see the Lord performing miracles throughout His ministry. They even saw Him bring people back to life. But they were in fear that Jesus was in fact still dead. The Jewish custom was to never take the word of a woman who made a report of something. Even though there was more than one woman with the report that they had seen Jesus they wouldn't believe because of who reported it.

So Jesus in His mercy while still hiding away in a locked room appeared to the disciples. One of the things used by those who wish to say that Jesus was really a ghost was the fact that He appeared to them in a locked room.

The disciples and the other followers of Jesus surely would've known that He wasn't in the room with them, but then suddenly was. Remember that during Jesus' ministry He didn't make full use of His Godhead. But now since He had been glorified He wasn't subject to this because the sins of man were paid for in full.

The creator and preserver of all things could as He desired these times in our text appear out of the blue. He always had these abilities and was now using them in full. This actually shows the fact that Jesus is God. Who else could perform such a miracle without the use of parlor tricks? No one can. Only God Himself could appear out of nowhere.

But the doubts that mankind has because of our flesh leads us to continue to doubt. Jesus knowing this went so far as showing the disciples what they wanted to see without asking it of Jesus. Jesus in true humility and for the love of souls showed them His body.

He showed them the scars on His wrists; He showed them the scar of the spear wound on His side. In actions Jesus was saying **“Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”**

And in another true act of mercy the Lord gave them what they needed so that they would believe. The desire of Jesus that they be believing and not unbelieving moved Him to breathe on them so that they

might receive the Holy Spirit and have faith in what they were seeing; the true risen body of their Lord and Savior so that they might then go out into the world as Jesus had done and preach the saving Gospel to the world.

But we continue to see the hardness of man's heart in Thomas. Even after hearing the report from an entire room full of people that they had seen Jesus there are still some who wouldn't believe. Thomas was at least very honest in his response to the disciples. Unless Thomas would not only see, but actually feel the body of Jesus he wouldn't believe. The original language shows Thomas' true intention. The use of a double negative is frowned upon in English. But in the Greek language a double negative shows the intense feelings and intentions of the speaker. Thomas said that unless he put his fingers into the holes and into the side of Jesus, he would **in no way** believe!

And yet again we see Jesus having compassion on all of us and to Thomas. Jesus once again uses His full powers and appears in a room with locked doors. A ghost? Certainly not! Jesus knowing the very thoughts and desires of Thomas without ever being told by another person volunteers Himself to the inspection of Thomas.

Thomas must've been amazed. Jesus knew exactly what Thomas was thinking because He is omniscient. He knows all things. Jesus knew that Thomas didn't want to put a stick into the holes of His wrists and side but Thomas' finger. And He knows the will of the Father that He doesn't desire us to be unbelieving, but believing.

**"My Lord and my God!"** Thomas replied! The will of God is complete. Thomas and the other disciples of Jesus are believing. All by the will of God's love for us. And that is truly what it takes. The will of God through the hearing of His word to believe that Jesus is arisen.

In Jesus' response not only to Thomas but to the entire room full of people He made it known that He was indeed happy with the fact that they were believing instead of unbelieving. But He also made it known that He was happy with the fact that there are those who believe without seeing.

And that is vital because we are included in this group. The fact that we cannot put our finger into the holes that the spikes left or into the wound that the spear left is all to God's glory. It is because of His desire that we be believing and not unbelieving.

The world has many arguments about everything found in Scripture. I pray that first the message of Jesus' bodily resurrection was strengthened in you today. With the result that you may not be in fear of your soul because of sin and have confidence in the fact that you will live forever with our Triune God in heaven.

And that you may be equipped to dispel the faith destroying false teachings of the world in regards to whether or not Jesus truly rose again with a physical body.

Do not be unbelieving, but believing. Amen.