

Church of Our Saviour  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

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Second Sunday of Easter

April 11, 2021

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Text: John 20:19-31

Title: "Behind Locked Doors"

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***In the Name of (+) Jesus our Lord. Amen.***

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There they were! Leaders in the new Christian movement!  
Behind locked doors! There they were people on whom the  
future of the Christian Church rested! Behind closed doors!  
There they were the ones who said and wrote the strong words  
on which the Jesus movement would be built! Behind locked  
doors!

Afraid! Afraid of the Jews? Jews who wanted Jesus crucified, but had no power to carry it out! They yelled for his crucifixion, but they could only yell! So, why, disciples, are you afraid? Why are you behind locked doors? What boogie man is after you? Why are you afraid?

You, can't be afraid! The future of the church Jesus established is on you! You can't be afraid! You've got work to do! Heavy, hard work is ahead! That's the nature of church work! It never ends! There is no time to hide behind locked doors! There is no time to be afraid! So why, disciples, are hiding behind locked doors? Afraid?

So, Jesus, visited them! "Peace be with you," he said! He showed them the wounds in his hands and in his side! Then, he sent them on their way! "The Father sent me, so I send you, he

said! “Receive the Holy Spirit, and, forgive sin!” And, be on your way! The work of faith will never get done if are you want to and need to be behind locked doors, afraid!

Fear is always a factor in human living! “We have nothing to fear, except fear itself,” President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said during the Great Depression in 1933! And the nation heard him then! Unlike now! Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Fear defeats more people than any other one thing in the world!” And, Woody Allen, not exactly a sterling human being, if reports are true, said, “I’m not afraid of death, I just don’t want to be around when it happens!” And how many times haven’t we heard and said during this time of COVID, I’ll do what it takes to be healthy because just don’t like the alternative!

And, then there is Thomas! A disciple! He was not in that locked room when Jesus came to visit! He was away somewhere on his own! He could have been with his fellow disciples, supporting them, in their time of fear! But he was not! He, it appears, is like so many in our day, was just absent! Away!

He paid for that!

Thomas carries a name! A name he has to carry the whole rest of his life! Doubting Thomas! That's the name! He is also called, Didymus, meaning, twin, in the Bible! Or, meaning, he could not make up his mind on issues, like the resurrection of Jesus! So, he had to put his hands on the wounds of Jesus to make sure before he "bought in" to the resurrection?

Names, nick names, like Doubting Thomas, are meant to harm and diminish others! Some of our politicians are so skillful! Do you think Jeb Bush will ever get out from under, Low Energy Jeb? Or, Hillary Clinton, out from under, Crooked Hillary? Or, Little Marco, out from under, Marco Rubio! Or, to get back to our Gospel reading, Thomas, out from under, Doubting Thomas?

Truth is, Thomas traveled farther and wider than any other disciples! He established the first Christian church in India, and he was martyred there, spears stabbed into his body until he died! Doubting Thomas? Hardly! Loving, merciful, gracious people of God never use names to diminish and make others look bad! It's not in us, is it?

In our time, there are some who call themselves, Christian, who insist that every Christian should be absolutely certain of all things in religious and anyone who isn't certain is inferior and a Bible doubter! Give me, honest Thomas, any day!

The disciples who hid behind locked doors, afraid, and Christians like us in our day, who are fearful for what's ahead for churches, must get out from behind locked doors and be brave! Church life in the future rests on us, church members!

As church membership falls, and it is falling, we once blamed "the generation!" They are not faithful! They do not go to church like previous generations did! We blamed the media for corrupting the hearts of people! We blamed the government for taking prayer out of school!

And once we finished blaming the forces outside of church, we are faced with a people all around us and us who still want the things of God in their lives, maybe now more than ever! They still seek justice, forgiveness, hope, love and belonging! People are still desperate for mercy, for meaning, for second chances!

Thomas didn't need that nick name that labeled him! A nick name that must have hurt and made him feel bad every time he heard it! That's not the Christian way! Thomas needed others to care, to show mercy, to see what he was really up to and doing when he stayed away! We're so quick to condemn!

We need the Thomas's, his honesty would be so helpful to us now! We need the Janes, the Bills, the Cheryls, the Roberts!

We need the people who know the church can be better and are willing to do what it takes to make it better!

The church in our time makes the news for all the wrong reasons! I love the church! But me, and all of us, should love Jesus more! And acknowledge how deep is our pain over losing the way, the light, the love of Jesus!

The church, we must confess, has done a terrible job in being faithful to the way of Jesus! Let's not kid ourselves! People aren't rejecting Jesus! They are turning away from churches that represent Jesus badly!

The prophets of old did not prophesy against the evil on the outside, but they said a lot about the unfaithfulness on the part of those members of church on the inside! The people loved the rituals of more than the God they worshiped! They



loved their religious identity more than the peace of the Lord!

Our sacred buildings were left behind, but God never, not even now, abandoned the people!

As Jesus died on the Cross he cried out, "It is finished!"

And he meant, injustice is finished! Greed and poverty are finished! Hatred is finished! Violence and alienation are finished! Did he mean it? Do we mean it?

He said, "It is finished!" to closed doors! They are now open! All the way open! Division between people of race, the white people, the black people, the brown people, is finished! Over! Done! He, meant it! Do we mean it?

What the church needs is not more members, but more Jesus, and what we should not be in a stew over is not people

who refuse to belong to churches, but churches who refuse to belong to Jesus! Because Jesus, is the Way, the Truth, the Life!

AMEN