

## **2 EASTER APRIL 11, 2010 CYCLE "C"**

**TITLE: LORD, WE HAVE SEEN BY FAITH AND HAVE  
COME TO BELIEVE.**

**READINGS: Acts 5:27-32, Ps.118:14-29, Rev.1:4-8, John  
20:19-31**

The readings for Easter and the Easter Season are some of the most beautiful and meaningful of the entire church year. Some of the verses are very familiar and dear to many. How encouraging and strengthening for us to hear Peter's words today: "We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:29-31. What a wonderful expression of rock-solid faith! And from Peter the rock. Then just look at the Psalm assigned for worship today. Does the following sound familiar and uplifting to you? "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it" Ps.118:22-24. It is very evident why we should rejoice and why the early Christian community cherished these words. It is because Christ the stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone of our lives. This **IS** the Lord's doing and it is certainly marvelous in our eyes. We cry out with thankful hearts "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

Now look at our selection from Revelation, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty...To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Rev.1:8, 5b-6. These are all mighty expressions of faith by eye witnesses, by the Apostles who saw him, walked with him and ate with him. But it is Jesus himself who assures us in today's Gospel reading that we who walk by faith, we who see him and believe in him with the eyes of faith, are also blessed. For he says,

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”  
Jn.20:29b

Even though we are called the believers, it does not mean that we are exempt from having doubts about our faith. I would say to you that any person who places himself beyond doubt, places himself above Christ. For even Jesus had doubts. He cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Faith is not the absence of doubt; it is the overcoming of doubt. Bret Blair, a pastor and contemporary writer tells us about standing by a graveside on an icy winter day when a bitter wind chapped his face. “I have heard the cries of families who have lost someone closer than life itself,” he says, “and I have thought silently to myself: Is it all true? Is resurrection reality? Are the scoffers correct? Is it all simply myth designed to get us through the night?” It was Alfred Lord Tennyson who said, “There lives more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds.” So we find ourselves crying out as did the father of the possessed boy who Jesus cured, “Lord, I do believe, help my unbelief.” Mk.9:24.

Our Gospel today gives us a most marvelous example of doubt and of doubt resolved in the doubting Thomas. John tells us that Thomas wasn't in the house when the risen Jesus came the first time through the locked doors. “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” Jn.20:25. But Thomas was there when Jesus came again and when he saw the risen Lord he made his confession of faith, “My Lord and my God.” Notice he didn't say Teacher or Messiah but God! It is the only place where Jesus is addressed as Lord and God without qualifications of any kind. Thomas was simply recognizing a fact. These are certainly the words of doubt resolved, words of deep and committed faith. Thanks be to God for Thomas. Like us he was human, he had doubts, he had faith. Jesus' words to Thomas after his confession of faith should give us great encouragement and comfort. “Blessed are those who have not seen yet still believe.” Jesus is talking about us. We will never see Jesus in this life. We will not have the chance to put our fingers in the nail holes or to touch his pierced side. Jesus understands that it's harder for us to believe than for Thomas and he counts us blessed. What wonder there is in that! How very awesome and

special that gift of grace we have received! Thank you, Lord, for helping me, who cannot see with my eyes, but can still believe with my heart!

We should not be surprised at experiencing doubt, but it is very important that we should move beyond doubt to living our faith, our commitment to Christ. In the early days of John Wesley's ministry he was racked with doubts and uncertainties. So he went to his old friend and mentor Peter Bohler and laid his soul bare. Bohler's response to Wesley may sound like it makes no sense at all, but there is great wisdom in what he said. "Preach faith till you have it," he told him, "and then because you have it, you will preach faith." He is saying act as if you have faith and because you do, faith will come to you. Our God will never desert us. He has assured us that resurrection is a reality for Jesus and it will be a reality for us. You are mine, you belong to me. We know and profess O God, that your Son Jesus has risen and lives, and we believe, alleluia! **Amen.**

**Pastor Barney**