



'Worship at home' April 7th 2024



Alleluia! Christ is risen:
Christ is risen, indeed!
Making all things new:

**Bringing the promise of new beginnings
and the hope of new opportunities.**

As we worship, we are reminded that Easter was not a once-off event: the events of Easter did not signify the end, but the beginning. As the first disciples experienced Christ's ongoing presence, so do we, as his Spirit continues at work today in our world, and in our lives.

John 20:19-23

That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the

Lord! Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." New Living Translation



Those disciples were hiding, in fear, shame, and grief, when the risen Christ came to them, offering peace, forgiveness and love. When we hide aspects of ourselves away, out of fear, shame or grief, the risen Christ comes to us, offering this same grace and bringing freedom and wholeness.

"Peace be with you", Jesus said to his disciples.

**How might you offer peace, forgiveness and love
to those around you this week?**

Prayer

When we need proof of you in the world
you offer your breath
When we hold too tight to the past
you offer your grace
When we cling to old hurts
you offer your love
When we use our words and actions to wound others
you offer your healing
When we fail to forgive those who hold our past against us
you offer your hope
When we hurt others, with or without intention
you offer your peace
When we separate ourselves from you
you offer your forgiveness, redeeming Christ,
you bring us back to you
You open closed hearts and heal injured souls
It is through your love and forgiveness
that we find healing and freedom
It is through you, risen Christ, that we are made whole
It is through you, risen Christ, that we are forgiven
It is through you, risen Christ, that we are made new
Amen



*adapted from United Church of Canada
<https://www.mountroyaluc.ca/en/default.php>*

John 20:24-31

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.” Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was

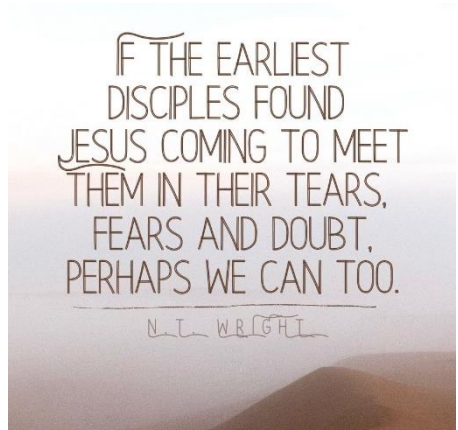
with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!” “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed.

Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.” The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones

recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

New Living Translation

Thomas wasn't ready to believe that Christ had risen until he experienced it for himself. He is sometimes called 'doubting Thomas' and rebuked for not having enough faith. However, sometimes we need to ask questions, to explore what we believe, and in order to grow in our faith. Some aspects of our faith can be difficult to believe: stones rolled away, bodies gone, angels from heaven, people appearing through locked doors and talking are not a part of our usual experience. This leads us to have questions and doubts.



**Which aspects of your faith challenge you most?
What questions do you have?**

If Columbus had not doubted the maps of his day, we would never know that the world was not flat (so the story goes!). Our world has flourished because of courageous people who doubted the status quo, refused to be silenced by the nagging crowd, and believed in the possibilities of new ways of thinking.



Like Thomas, we don't simply accept what others say: we want to experience the risen Christ for ourselves. Faith is not a system of beliefs to be accepted, or a list of rules to be followed; rather faith is a relationship with God who offers each of us peace, grace, freedom and wholeness.

Doubt is not the opposite of faith: doubt can be a healthy and essential part of our faith. Doubt is what happens when we don't simply accept what we are told at face value, but really struggle to understand it for ourselves. Doubt can make us willing to let go of old ways of seeing and free us to explore new ideas, moving us from simple acceptance to a living, growing faith that encompasses our whole lives and transforms our whole beings.

Pray for

- our world: that all people, who have one Maker and Father, may acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters, without discrimination of race or nation, and with sincere hearts
- the people of Palestine and Israel; and the people of Ukraine and Russia may they find an end to their wars
- those impacted by natural disasters, floods, droughts and fires and for those struggling with conflict, poverty and starvation; and for the agencies and aid workers that continue to provide support and hope
- those who struggle with doubts and how to have faith in times of darkness and despair



Closing

Risen Christ, God with us

You come to us, sometimes unexpectedly

You call us by name

Break in and touch our lives

So that we might believe and know you as risen

Walk with us

So that we might better understand your way

Commission us

So that we might embrace your purpose

Breathe on us

So that we might receive the Spirit

Challenge us to love you just as you have loved us

So that we might show your love and grace to all others

Amen.

- adapted from [Jon Humphries](#)