

## **“Happy Belated Easter”**

*Gospel: John 20:19-31*

Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf April 19, 2020

"Happy Belated Easter!" My brother texted me. I laughed! Never heard that before. Recently I greeted my neighbor Randy, "Happy Easter," and he responded ...you guessed it..."Happy Belated Easter!" This is the same brother who said, "Lord, don't give me Faith to move mountains, give me faith to move me!" Echoes a familiar phrase, "Lord, I believe help my unbelief."

From today's Gospel, a believing Thomas emerges when his words were heard and answered by encountering the resurrected Jesus. Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe!" Thomas ... changed... believing answered him, "My Lord and my God!" I say, better late than never.

Happy Belated Easter everybody! I have doubts about what to believe is real and true. I am not alone and neither are you. Luther's prayer admits doubts (page 87 ELW). "Behold Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My Lord, fill it. I am weak in the faith; strengthen me. I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent, that my love may go out to my neighbor. I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether. O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you. In you I have sealed the treasure of all I have. I am poor; you are rich and came to be merciful to the poor. I am a sinner; you are upright. With me, there is an abundance of sin; in you is the fullness of righteousness. Therefore, I will remain with you; of whom I can receive, but to whom I may not give. Amen."

What to do about doubts say it to yourself, to others and to the Lord in prayer. Then you and I are not alone in our uncertainties. We receive a response sometimes early or later. Hear a morning prayer from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Oh God, early in the morning I cry to you. Help me to pray and concentrate my thoughts on you I cannot do this alone. In me there is darkness, but with you there is light; I am lonely, but you do not leave me; I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help; I am restless, but with you there is peace. In me there is bitterness,

but with you there is patience; I do not understand your ways, but you know the way for me... Restore me to liberty, and enable me so to live now that I may answer before you and before me. Lord, whatever this day may bring. Your name be praised. Amen (page 1002 vol. 1 "For All the Saints")

Thomas received this new commandment "Do not doubt but believe." Recall how young children keep asking "Why?" You give them the answers and again they ask "Why?" After a while you say "because I said so." Do not doubt but believe because Our Lord Jesus said so. And more is given Jesus said "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Being reminded again and again strengthens my belief...even Happy Belated Easter!

Christ is risen He is risen indeed, Alleluia! Now the peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.