

John 20: 19-31 “The Everyman Apostle” April 12, 2026 page 1 of 6
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Last Sunday we celebrated Jesus’ resurrection and stepped into the joyous *season* of Eastertide — those 50 days between Resurrection Sunday, to Jesus’ ascending to Heaven, to the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost. 50 days to sit with the miracle, to let it work on us, and in us.

Just as our own resurrection story featured Mary Magdalene, she is a key figure in the Orthodox Christian Church, also. On their Julian calendar, TODAY is Easter Sunday, often called **Pascha**.

And next Sunday is *Thomas Sunday* or *New Sunday*. That day commemorates Christ’s appearance to the Apostle Thomas.

We follow Thomas today, in the second half of John 20. Jesus has directed Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” We pick up the story later that day.

John 20:19-Jesus appears to the disciples

¹⁹ It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you don’t forgive them, they aren’t forgiven.”

Jesus appears to Thomas and the disciples

²⁴ Thomas, the one called Didymus, or “twin,”^[a] one of the Twelve, wasn’t with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, “We’ve seen the Lord!”

But he replied, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won’t believe.”

²⁶ After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!"

²⁸ Thomas responded to Jesus, "*My Lord and my God!*"

²⁹ Jesus replied, "Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don't see and yet believe."

³⁰ Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. ³¹ But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us... thanks be to God!

So, where was he? Thomas, I mean. Why did he break ranks? How could he have not been there, with all the others? It would give us the perfect Hallmark Easter movie ending.

But in John's resurrection account, one of huge redemptive activity, it is Thomas' very absence that brings us close to the resurrected Jesus, wounds and all; the good shepherd, who seeks out the apostle that requires proof. John's account is so personal, so accessible. We are on the ground observers of this miracle, as fear and anxiety give way to peace of mind.

Let's recall the previous week.

To the disciples, their Rabbani is not Jesus the Christ, enthroned in glory; but an itinerant Nazarene with a target on his back. While the faithful honor Jesus as he approaches Jerusalem, Herod comes through the main gate, riding a stallion, accompanied by his legions. He always came during Passover, to keep a lid on things.

And as the disciples feel the Jewish authorities closing in on them, Jesus creates chaos at the temple.

Jesus' body would be taken away from the cross by two men who were well connected. But even they acted under cover of darkness, for their own safety. Small wonder that Thomas and all the disciples seek escape from the known and the unknown.

There's much to consider about Thomas. I view him as the *every man Apostle*. Often times he's a mirror for the questions and hopes of us all.

Many scholars think John's own audience was wrestling with the fact that they had not seen the risen Jesus in person. Jesus' words to Thomas speak to them, and to us; believe through discipleship and testimony. Put another way: Be the Church. Seek the peace of Christ above all. Trust and believe.

John 20:30-31 is widely seen as the original ending of the Gospel. Thus, Thomas's story is elevated; Jesus is not put off by human questioning. It's often the doorway to deeper faith.

Often people grieve in community. Thomas is not most people. He needs to see and touch the wounds of Jesus, if he is to believe the miracle. How does he spend that week in seclusion, the long days and nights? How might we spend them? Maybe he remembers Jesus' words about his *body broken and his blood shed*. Maybe it's the 7 Last Words from the cross. Thomas might cry himself to sleep. But he is resolute.

I put his questioning alongside Martha's as she says to Jesus, "*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*" Personally, I think of when my own father died, being suddenly cast in the role of an orphan. It swallows up the emotions.

Each gospel portrays Jesus differently. In Matthew he is king. In Mark Jesus is fully human. In Luke he is the servant. In John's gospel, Jesus is one with God. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

So when truth stands before Thomas, in the person of the resurrected Lord, he makes one of the strongest declarations of faith in all the New Testament; *My Lord and My God!*

Jesus delivers Thomas from the wounds of doubt to restored relationship. That's what Jesus does. And how can we NOT encounter those wounds, remnants of unspeakable cruelty? We have an apostle in honest doubt, and a risen Savior who refuses to leave anyone behind.

While doubting may be Thomas's nature, his companions display impulsivity, ambition, dismissiveness, temper tantrums, and political extremism. Together they demonstrate that Jesus doesn't call the equipped, but rather equips the called. And it is these very people that Jesus breathes upon and endows with the apostolic commission. "Receive the Holy Spirit." For all their frailties, Jesus entrusts the future of His Church to this group of mortals. And to us.

Thomas must see and touch the wounds of crucifixion. But keep in mind, Mary Magdalene recognizes Jesus only when he calls her name. And the others were skeptical that she has seen the Lord until they witness him in person. And when Jesus does appear to the others, he shows them his hands and side. So it's not like they showed any more faithful insight than Thomas does.

Jesus' returning for Thomas is a lesson for us all. Those who ask for proof, who doubt their way into faith; they will not be overlooked. Think of Thomas' doubt as a form of honesty, a spiritual discipline that Jesus honors by saying, "Touch my hands. Touch my side." And remember, *there's no evidence that Thomas does that!* His faith explodes as he goes immediately to a declaration of praise.

Nephew and godson Sam shared this insight about Thomas: that he could disciple any atheist, because his was evidence-based witness; He could say, *I've been there. But when I saw his hands and side... THEN I KNEW the truth; it was right in front of me.* I'm reminded that to spell "Jesus" in American Sign Language, we touch a finger to the middle of each palm.

Now, for those of us who study the Enneagram, Thomas' core motivations are like those of a bi-wing Type 6, The Loyal Skeptic who needs certainty, but is courageous in the search and deeply loyal when convinced. *You know who you are!* Thomas lives in his head. I can relate. Perhaps you can, too. John's gospel names him "Thomas, the twin."

Some modern scholars see it as symbolizing his character, both doubtful and courageous.

In the Gospels Thomas speaks honestly and directly—sometimes asking the questions others are afraid to voice. In John 14, it is Thomas who asks Jesus, *“Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?”* Jesus’ gives Thomas a mountaintop reply: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”* It’s similar to Jesus’ words to Martha: *“I am the resurrection and the life.”* Jesus speaks most profoundly to those who are ready to hear.

Such lessons Thomas offers: that faith includes times of confusion, and honest questions can lead to clearer vision. The road to belief is a personal one. It’s a journey we all take. And Thomas believes deeply. He is the disciple of embodied faith.

In John 11, when the disciples learn of Lazarus’ death, and Jesus’ plans to go there in spite of the risk he faces, it is Thomas who declares, *“Let us go, too, so that we may die with Jesus.”*

But only Jesus dies. It is the Day of Preparation for Passover, and the soldiers do a rush job to clear the scene. And Thomas disappears into himself. He spends a week confronting THAT news. *“How could Jesus be alive?”* Yes, Jesus had told them, over and over, what was coming. But the mind and spirit can only absorb so much.

When Thomas is back in community, and Jesus returns to him, Thomas does not hold back. Neither, I suspect, would we.

Now, as we know, Thomas’ appearance in John 20 is adjacent to that of Mary Magdalene. Her Enneagram core motivations are those of a bi-wing 2. It’s a profile she shares with Pastor Sarah.

And by the way, long before there were gospels... back in the days of Paul’s epistles ... both Mary Magdalene and the Apostle Thomas wrote gospels of their own. Thomas’s gospel includes 114 sayings of Jesus, including parables of the Sower, the Mustard Seed, the speck in the other’s eye and the beam in our own eye, the blind leading the blind, and the early Beatitudes.

Thomas is one of six to join Peter in the fishing boat. Jesus will call them to the shore, and Thomas will witness Jesus' bidding to Peter: *"If you love me, feed my sheep."* On the Mount of Olives Thomas and the others receive the Great Commission, to "go and make disciples of all nations."

Thomas will follow Jesus' call to ministry. He will journey to the Kerala region of southwest India. There he will build the Mar Thoma Church. He is still honored by the St. Thomas Christian communities. Syrian and Indian Christian traditions say that St. Thomas also was martyred for his faith.

But first, in Chapter 1 of Acts of the Apostles, we find Jesus' followers together one more time in the Upper Room, that place of foot washings, a Passover meal, and a dark prediction. Jesus directs them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit for the world. Thomas is there, even though he has little idea of what lies just ahead.

And, I suggest, it's the same for you and me. Why do I say this? Because of those Chapter 1 apostles and disciples, their numbers were nearly the same as our current St Andrew's membership, ... And from that remnant would come the worldwide ministry and mission of the Church in every age.

Jesus' message comes to Mary Magdalene — and to Thomas, and to us: Accept your commission. Go and tell. Give it your all. Show love to the world, because I first loved you.

This is the work of Eastertide ... to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus as an ongoing, transformative reality in the midst of confusion and despair. We are to be light in the darkness, to disciple the world, to bring the joy of new creation and baptismal identity. It's our Lord's mission for his Church in 2026 and always, no matter what. As believers we have new life in Jesus' name. As Easter people, let us declare together, *My Lord and My God.*

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