

An Order of Worship for the Home

April 11, 2021

Guest Pastor – Gary Mohr

This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we continue our Covid adjustments related to gathering, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

Reader 1: We gather to worship. We gather to pray.
Reader 2: We gather to our God and to his word.
Reader 1: We gather in the name of our God who is...
Reader 2: Father, Son and Holy Spirit...
Together: Amen.

Psalms 148

Reader 1:
¹Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
²Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his hosts!

Reader 2:
³Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you shining stars!

⁴Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!

⁵Let them praise the name of the Lord!
For he commanded and they were created.

⁶And he established them forever and ever;
he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.

⁷Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all deeps,
⁸fire and hail, snow and mist,
stormy wind fulfilling his word!

⁹Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!

¹⁰Beasts and all livestock,
creeping things and flying birds!

¹¹Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
¹²Young men and maidens together,
old men and children!

¹³Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his majesty is above earth and heaven.

¹⁴He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his saints,
for the people of Israel who are near to him.

Praise the Lord!

Confession & Absolution

Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered. (From the order of Compline, Lutheran Service Book p.254)

Christian Confessing: I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault; wherefore I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.

Christian Responding: The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins.

Together: Amen

1 John 1:1-2:2

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

^{2:1}“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see

my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Message

The Thomas Experience

In a Charlie Brown cartoon, Charlie and Lucy are walking home from their last day of school; when Charlie suddenly blurts out, “Lucy, I got straight A’s on my report card, isn’t that great!”

Lucy looks at him very skeptically and says: “I don’t believe you Charlie Brown. Unless you show me your report card, I cannot believe you.”

Lucy knows Charlie Brown as a born-loser who never does anything right. This is more than she can believe.

Our gospel lesson for today describes Jesus’ first disciples as real people, like you and me. In fact when we think of the Lord’s disciples, we can label several of them with certain words. For example we label Judas Iscariot as the Betrayer; Peter denied knowing Christ but was also “the Rock” for his statement of faith. John we think of as the one Jesus loved. And Thomas is better known as Doubting Thomas.

Let’s see if this label Doubting Thomas really fits and what it means for us. To be referred to as a Doubting Thomas is not a positive label. So does Thomas get a bad rap?

We don’t usually think of Jesus’ first disciples as being doubters and skeptics. After all, they dropped everything to follow Jesus during his 3 year ministry and then went on to boldly preach good news until most of them were executed for their faith. What a complete commitment. But now Good Friday has come. They had invested

everything in following Jesus. Mark 10:27 records Peter saying to Jesus, "We have left everything to follow you!"

They had high hopes and dreams for the coming of the Kingdom. And then "This!" Jesus gets arrested and he dies. HE DIES!!!! It's not surprising that some slipped through fear into skepticism. In John 20 we read

"Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.'" (John 20:24-25)

Thomas wasn't the only one who doubted as Mathew 28:16 records "SOME doubted."

The word doubt means "to stand in two ways." It implies an inability to make a decision.

John also uses the word doubt as *simply* meaning to be without faith. Here in John 20, Thomas could not believe what the disciples were saying. And so when Jesus meets Thomas face to face he says to him "stop doubting"—stop being without faith.

The implication is not that such a doubter is not a Christian – it is rather that they are 'spiritually paralyzed" and unable to move forward. They are in a genuine crisis of faith.

Have you ever had "serious doubts" about something? If I have "serious doubts" about how an organization is using my contributions, I stop giving to them until I can check it out.

I know people who have serious doubts about flying. It has taken one of our sons years to go ahead and fly and discover how getting over this hurdle can allow him to experience Hawaii and many other places in this world. That's what skepticism does. It puts you between two decisions and stops you from moving forward.

Have you ever had serious doubts about your Christian faith? I have. In my teenage years I wondered if Christ was real. There were hymns I could not sing,

portions of creeds I would mumble through with my questions. I wasn't being "godless" or a heretic. I was having a crisis of faith and I prayed daily about it.

I remember when God gave me an "Ah, Ha," moment. He showed me the alternative. If there is NO God, there is no creation and without a creation everything is an accident. And if everything is an accident, I needed much more faith to believe that than the fact that God created it all. God gave me truth.

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:26-28)

Thomas is not the only Biblical person with doubts and fears. Moses doubted that he was the man to lead Israel out of Egyptian slavery. So God gave him many convincing proofs and a side-kick. Job had his doubts about how God governed the world.

The poet, Alfred Tennyson once wrote: "There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds." Lutheran theologian, Paul Tillich (in *The Dynamics of Faith*) once said that faith and doubt are not opposites but different sides of the same coin. For Tillich, without doubt, faith is not genuine.

In our day, some of the greatest skeptics have become great Christian apologists. Well-known examples include: C.S. Lewis, Josh McDowell, and Lee Strobel. Perhaps you are one as well.

Our gospel today tells us that it is quite alright to be a skeptic. Our God is not so small, or so limited that faith in Him can be destroyed by our doubts and skepticism. Life is a complicated mixture of doubt and faith. We all have our days of doubt and skepticism. Thomas challenges each one of us to be honest with God and with ourselves about our faith.

Notice that Thomas's doubts did not stop him from meeting with the other disciples. He was sincere with them about his skepticism but he did not shut them out. And

notice, too, that they did not kick him to the curb either. Together, as part of the family of God, they ALL grew through this crisis of faith that Thomas (and some of the others) were having.

I'm so glad that God included this Thomas event in the Bible for us to pause and study today. It reminds us that if and when we are going through a crisis of faith we still need to meet together as we pray, "Lord I believe, help my unbelief." It also reminds us that just as Jesus prayed for Peter when Satan desired to sift Him as wheat, and just as Jesus met Thomas in truth, so God will bring you through your struggle with doubt as well.

James Dobson tells the story about a lady who was watching a butterfly as it struggled to work its way out of the cocoon. Soon she just couldn't stand to see it any longer so she got a tiny knife and carefully cut the cocoon to help the butterfly work its way out. And sure enough, the beautiful butterfly got out and stretched its wings and began to flutter for a few seconds. Then w/o any reason it fell to the ground and soon died. This lady discovered too late that the struggle to get out of the cocoon is what makes a butterfly's wings strong enough to fly. Without the struggle the butterfly had no life.

I've got a feeling that God uses our doubts to force us to struggle with the realities of our faith. It's not that he likes to see us struggle but because he wants us to grow in our faith.

This may sound paradoxical but it's true. The one place where doubters ought to feel the most secure and comfortable is in the church. Here's why! The Bible says in Jude 22 "And have mercy on those who doubt." In other words, we are here for one another.

Now as a result of Jesus responding to Thomas' doubt with grace and patience, look what happened? Thomas made one of the greatest declarations of faith in the whole New Testament – "My Lord and My God!" Thomas's life was radically changed. Tradition tells us that Thomas took the gospel to India where he gave his life sharing the good news of forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

The second great truth in today's gospel lesson is: people are blessed who believe in the resurrected Christ without seeing. This is a tough one for us since we live in the scientific age. We want to test and prove everything.

However, that's not what happens. For example, when a news event happens, the irony is that what we see or hear or read from the mass media is not from our eye witnessing the event, but rather, we must ultimately rely on the reporting of journalists who are biased and often present incomplete coverage of the event. When you think about it, our watching the news is actually a form of faith. Moreover, it is a faith which does not see or touch, because we are not physically there.

It is also interesting that when the resurrected Jesus did come face to face with Thomas, there is no mention of Thomas actually touching Jesus, even though he had the opportunity. Seeing was enough for Thomas to believe. Yet, more interesting is Jesus' comment to us that we are most blessed for believing without seeing.

The original disciples of Jesus witnessed His resurrection first hand. They saw the marvelous healings; the dramatic conversions; heard Jesus speak the Sermon on the Mount and ultimately saw Jesus die on cross and then come back to life on that first Easter Sunday. And yet Jesus calls you and me more blessed than they.

We who are called to believe without seeing are special in God's eyes. We who risk to believe in the Word of God and the various witnesses of the past are the most blessed. Ultimately we learn that believing is a gift from God to us. As Martin Luther put it: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel." This is only possible through God's work of creating faith in you and me.

Today as we hear the proclamation of the Gospel and participate in the sacraments that faith is given, nurtured and strengthened in you and me. Today as we celebrate God's Word, the risen Christ is right here with us. That's why we keep coming back over and over again to receive his blessings.

May God continue to grant each of us that wonderful gift of believing in the one who saves us from all our sins. Amen.

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.

Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.

Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.

Reader 2: Receive our offerings.

Together: Receive us as your own.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26)

Reader 1: The Lord bless you and keep you.

Reader 2: The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Reader 1: The Lord look upon you with favor...

Reader 2: And give you peace.

Together: Amen.

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

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