

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**Title: We Have Seen the Lord****Lesson: John 20:19-31 NRSV**

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² 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 retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, 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 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."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, 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. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt 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 come to believe."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may

come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Beloved, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Today is the second Sunday of Easter. We believe and confess the resurrection of Christ. Many countries guarantee the freedom of religion today, so what we believe and our confession do not threaten our lives and we don't need to prepare ourselves for death because of our faith. However, two thousands years ago, the situation was totally different from now.

As Jesus started his ministry, he healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. He also had twelve disciples who follow Jesus confessing him as the Son of God, the Lord, and Christ. Even when Jesus was with them at the last Supper, even when he washed their feet, their thoughts and beliefs seemed to have remained constant.

However, Jesus, who was confessed as Christ by his disciples, was arrested by Roman soldiers, he was mocked by many and his flesh was torn by whipping, he was naked, and was crucified which was executed only to those who committed serious crimes such as treason. In a day, their memories with Jesus and their confession that confessed Jesus as Christ, and their faith totally vanished. Just before Jesus was captured by the Roman soldiers, to the disciples Jesus was their pride and their honor, and their glory because he performed a lot of amazing miracles; people liked him and always followed wherever he went. However, when Jesus was crucified and was dying on the cross, there was no one who was with him. Yes, Jesus was betrayed by all human beings. Now we may think that they were cowardly, but to stand by Jesus at the time meant to die on the cross with him. After reading this scripture, I closed my eyes and put a hand on my heart and asked myself, "If I was there, would I have been different from the disciples?" I would like to ask you as well, "If you were there, would you have been different from them?" I knew

how difficult it was to be on the side of Jesus at the time, and I was able to understand the fear and anxiety they felt.

They were so scared and were afraid of death. They were always anxious and nervous that someone would accuse them of being disciples of Jesus. So, after Jesus died on the cross, they couldn't even go to his tomb. Because they were so afraid of the Jews, they locked themselves inside their homes.

Before Jesus was arrested, he prophesied several times. What was that? That he would be raised from the dead on the third day. The New Testament describes Jesus was raised on the third day indeed and his tomb was empty. However, Jesus' disciples were captured by fear so they forgot what Jesus had foretold.

But, at that very moment, an amazing miracle happened. Jesus came to them when they were doing nothing with fear, frustration, and defeat. And he stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (19) After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (20) Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (21) When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. (22) If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (23)

This is an amazing miracle that Jesus came to them. They couldn't know how Jesus came to them because they locked all the doors of the house. Also, they could not explain convincingly and objectively what they saw to others, but Jesus definitely came to them, and they were changed.

Until Jesus came to them, they were betrayers, they lived in anxiety, fear, defeat, and frustration, but when he came to them, they were freed from all fear; they were captured by joy. After seeing the risen Jesus Christ,

they not only were liberated from their fear of death, their fear of people's ridicule, frustration, and defeat, but also found peace of mind and became totally different people than before.

When the miracle happened, unfortunately, Thomas wasn't there. So, when the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord," he didn't believe it and said, "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." When we read this description, Thomas in the Bible seemed to have been a rational person.

My college major was the philosophy of religion. From my major, I learned western philosophy, eastern philosophy, Korean philosophy, phenomenology and other religions and so on. There are people in the world who try to prove everything including God's presence. Some of them defend the presence of God, while others deny it. Thomas described in the Bible seems to have been that kind of person.

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (26) Then he 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."(27) How did Thomas feel then, who had denied the resurrection of Jesus Christ despite other disciples' witnesses and testimonies? He must have really put his fingers in Jesus' hands and side. And he couldn't deny it anymore. Only then, Thomas answered Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" (28)

Thomas came to believe only when he met the risen Christ in person. So how can we believe and accept Jesus' resurrection in the 21st century we live in? In fact, Christ has been with us since the beginning before we knew him and He comes to our hearts every day and says, "Peace be with you." I'm not sure if the day when people can prove Jesus'

resurrection scientifically is coming, but we can prove His resurrection in our lives. All the events described in the New Testament are deeply related to Jesus Christ. And, they proved the risen Christ in their lives and lived as witnesses of Christ. As 1 John 1:5 tells, God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. There is light in the lives of those who have seen and met and experienced the risen and living Christ.

The risen Christ, the living Holy Spirit, comes to us every day and sends us to those who are in sadness, depression, frustration, isolation, despair and encourage us to be with them just as God sent Jesus to us. The risen Christ is with us and lives in our hearts.

Beloved, do you believe the risen Christ? Then, live in Christ, live in light, no darkness. Live in joy, but mourn with those who mourn. Live as a witness of Christ. Live in grace. Live in love. Live in the life of resurrection. May we live in joy, love, and grace of Christ every day and live as witnesses of the risen Christ in our lives. Amen.