

“What Do You Know?”  
Acts 2:29-32, 37-42;  
1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

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He is risen! He is risen indeed! We usually just say that on Easter Sunday morning, but this is really the Easter season, all the way up through Pentecost. It's a time to remember and to think about that. We say those words—He is risen; his is risen indeed—as part of that remembering of Christ's resurrection on Easter. And yet, if we think about it, those words are not the ones we might expect in most cases. We don't have much experience with somebody being risen again, even though we talk about Christ being risen indeed. I wonder if sometimes it's a little hard to think about the reality of Christ rising again.

We have a general experience, and it is that with which we begin to shape our understanding of the world. We talked, as we went through Lent, about how this world is not easy to understand. It's full of randomness, chaos, and risk—and we can't always figure out what's going to happen. So we look for ways, I think, of understanding or grasping it. After all, it's really helpful if we can have a leash on the world, a way of understanding, a way of trying to find our way and making sure things are under control. But sometimes we discover it's not quite that easy.

I was reminded this week that in the early 1900s there was a switch in physics. There was a time when everybody thought the world was one way, and then all of a sudden they began to realize that some things like light acted in really strange ways. It acts like both a particle and a wave. These physicists were trying to figure out the world and it was changing on them. They thought that everything was continuous and all of a sudden they found that things worked in little chunks called quantum. So they came up with this thing called quantum theory and people at first thought it was just a mathematical trick to make things work. Einstein didn't like it, but then he showed that it worked for things like the way light works. Their leash on the world wasn't quite what they thought it was. They had to change.

It's easy to try to come up with a way of understanding the world. We have to, in fact, have some way of understanding the world we're in, something that helps us get a grip, a leash on life.

I wonder if that wasn't part of what Thomas' problem was. I'm going to do some supposing about Thomas. I wonder if what Thomas was thinking as he joined with Jesus was that he was looking around, seeing the way religious society worked in his day. The way the temple worked just wasn't right. The people who ran the temple were getting rich on the temple tax imposed on everybody else. They weren't really bringing people to know God. I wonder if that might have been Thomas' perspective.

We know that when Lazarus died, he had this real empathy. He said, “Let's go die with him.” He had this empathy for the people, for what was happening. So maybe he

had this idea that the religious order of the day should really be working better for the people. And here came Jesus, and as Thomas listened to him, he felt like here's one who really cares for the people. He understands and he can lead us to a religious renewal. He's going to be the one that throws those rascals out of the temple, renews it, revitalizes it. He must have been really excited the day Jesus went in and actually threw people out of the temple—the money lenders and those selling things there. He had seen Jesus, time after time, being able to turn a crowd by simply the way he talked. He had shown up every attempt people had made to trip him up. He had every confidence that that's what Jesus would continue to do, and soon he would be leading the temple, guiding the people.

We don't know all that about Thomas. We do know that when Jesus died, something happened for Thomas. His expectations weren't fulfilled. His world had fallen apart. He couldn't believe the stories of Jesus coming back. It didn't fit his narrative, his idea, his leash on the way things were. So instead, he said it couldn't be. He doubted. So Jesus showed up again. This is always the point where we can say it's really helpful for those of us who have doubts, because Thomas doubted and still, Jesus comes again. In that encounter, Thomas lets go of what he thought knew. He quit trusting in what he thought he knew and said, "I believe. I trust in you."

You see, that's the key. It's not about having a leash on life, thinking that I've got the truth, but it's trusting in the one who does have it, who *is* the truth. It was his conversion from his own expectations and ways of understanding to trusting in Jesus that changed Thomas' life.

That's what Easter, at least in part, is about. It's recognizing that we don't have to have it all figured out ourselves. In fact, if we look at the world around us, I'm not sure we can. But we have to know where we can trust, who we can trust. We can trust Jesus.

He didn't come just to mess up Thomas' expectations. He does that a little bit—messes up some expectations. But it's because we build up expectations about things that aren't going to work out. They just aren't right. We can set up the world in all kinds of ways and try to make it work that way, but it helps if we follow the one who knows how the world works, and trust in the one for whom death is not an issue and life is the gift he gives.

So when the people heard Peter preaching about this, the question was, "What do we do now?" And Peter simply said, "Change your life." That's easier said than done, isn't it? But really, I think what he's saying is that it's not that we can simply change our whole set of understandings, but we begin by reorienting and trusting in Jesus, allowing him to lead us. And when we do, we begin to discover things. We discover that we get grouped together and that we get to come together and commune, share in communion. We are led to a shared participation in life. There are all kinds of things we get to do, but it is as we follow Jesus, as it says at the end of Matthew, we will have life in his name. We follow him into life.

Sometimes I think my leash is going to give me life, and I'm always wrong. It's not trusting myself, it's trusting Christ. When I trust in him, it's a lot easier to live life. You know, I started this with "what do you know" because a lot of times I think it's all about what I know, but really the only thing I know is that I can trust Jesus and in doing that, he leads us into life. You might say he gives life to life.

Let's pray:

Lord, sometimes it's a little hard to understand exactly all you have done. Resurrection is not something that is easy to get our hands around. There are a lot of things we think we know about the world around us that we try to use. Help us, Lord, recognize that for all we think we might know there's always the unexpected, and we need you. You are the one who truly overcomes death and shows us life, leads us into life, fills us with life. Let us trust you. Let us follow you. Thank you. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.