

Second Sunday Easter -B- 2018
Acts 4.32-35///1 John 5.1-6///John 20.19-31

→the week after Easter you can buy chocolate bunnies at the grocery store and lilies at the florist for 50% off

→the week after Easter you can find a parking space and seat here in Church much easier than you could last week

→and the week after Easter the new dress is not brand new anymore

→...and Easter baskets have been replaced with barbecue items and Mother's Day cards

→here we are ...just one week after Easter...another special day past and put back on the shelf...

→yet according to our faith...our belief...our reason for existence...Easter is not just another day on the calendar...but rather...Easter is the beginning of a whole new way of experiencing life and facing death....

→and today we continue this beginning...in fact the Church celebrates a season of Sunday's reflecting on Easter and the ways the risen Christ is still living and active here on earth

→over the next handful of Sundays we will continue to listen to the stories of Scripture as they call us to reflect upon and apply the impact of Easter...the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

→and just like ripples continuing to come ashore after a boat has passed...these stories will wash over us and hopefully shed new light and inspire new hope for our journey

→and we begin today...with this familiar story....the same story we hear every year on the first Sunday after Easter

→it takes place on the evening of that first Easter, and then one week later, the very week where we find ourselves today

→the disciples were huddled together that night...in a house behind locked doors....still fearing for their lives

→they had heard the story from Mary Magdalene about seeing the risen Lord

→they had heard the report from Peter and the beloved disciple about the empty tomb...but as of yet...none of them had actually seen the risen Lord

→so...still gripped by fear...unsure of what had happened or what was going to happen next...they are compelled to gather together....like mourners at a wake or members of a support group who share a common cause.

→the problem however with this gathering is that there is no one there to lift the spirits of this group....

→for them...they are still trapped by the thought that death is final...

→[they are] still thinking that death is more powerful than life...hate more powerful than love....darkness more powerful than light

PAUSE

→and then Jesus appears in their midst...without unlocking the doors...and greets them with words of blessing and assurance.... *"Peace be with you"*

→and with those words...Jesus gives them the courage to replace the empty center of their hearts

--He gives them purpose to replace their confusion.....

--Jesus.....gives them meaning to replace their bewilderment

→and in doing so...he breathes on them...to spread this **"peace"** to the world...putting a fresh wind within them and creating an Easter people of new life

→but unfortunately Thomas misses this all important first gathering

→and so....upon returning...even after seeing his friends changed attitude and enthusiasm.....he isn't convinced

→and then one week later Jesus appears again...this time coming to Thomas in the midst of his crisis to bring him peace and comfort, hope and compassion

→for Thomas...it is a defining moment as he embraces Christ and realizes what has happened

→likewise.....for you and me...this Easter season and the feast of the resurrection is also a defining moment of hope and comfort in our lives and church

→Easter is a time of new growth and new life

→IT IS the transformation of our suffering into a new beginning, a new way of life

→and our gathering here today and every week....allows us to begin this new way of life...this new beginning

→today each of us has a choice to make----whether to focus on those difficult aspects of life or choose to use them as defining moments and carry on the message and mission of Christ and continue to appreciate the many blessings we have received.

----unfortunately for Thomas it was a whole week later for him compared to the other disciples....in a certain sense Thomas wasted a week...perhaps we should not waste any more time as well

but instead maybe it is time for us roll away the stones in our lives and meet the risen Lord....now is the time, more than ever, for all of us to continue to trust, to believe and to receive the goodness of our Lord and our faith.

--it is the week after Easter...but it is not too late for you and me to be an Easter person

→the cards and candy maybe 50% off....

→the baskets may have been replaced by grills and charcoal

→but the message of Easter...the joy of the resurrection and the meaning
of new life continues on...

→may this time...and what we believe and celebrate...be ever
enduring...everlasting...and the ultimate source of our hope and promise