

“Great 50 Days with the Risen”
Part 1. Doubting Thomas
John 20:19-31

Easter inaugurates a great season of 50 days, until the day of Pentecost. From last Sunday, Easter Sunday till June 8, the second Sunday in June, the Christian churches around the world celebrate the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

I would like to have a couple of goals during the season, called Easter-tide – Great 50 days!

1. Each Sunday, I would like to celebrate **the Risen Lord Jesus Christ!** I hope every one of you celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the celebration, I want you to have power over failure and anxiety as well as victorious triumph over the sin and death!
2. Each Sunday, we are going to **offer the gospel to our beloved children**, friends, and relatives! Easter is good (perfect) season to bring people to Christ. Do not miss the opportunity to save your beloved family members and friends from the sins of the world! The ministry of the church will help them see what the church is doing for the transformation of the world.
3. Each Sunday, we will **encounter Easter people**, beginning with the biblical figures. I want you to encounter Easter people, because they were the most influential people.

Time magazine recognize “The 100 most influential people around this time of the year.” I don’t know why they do

it around this time. I assume Easter season cause it to happen. This year, 100 people from 6 continents, are nominated by Time magazine, in fact, by friends of well-known. They are in the five categories: **titans, pioneers, artists, leaders, and icons. But, these individuals are pretty much exposed by mass media**, which convince us the power of influence. I believe more people working behind scene are more influential than these folks exposed in public.

After Easter celebration, I would go to Orlando, Florida, over the last several years to meet and greet Easter people at Exponential Conference. I enjoy this gathering of clergy and laity, because they are the most influential people. This year, again, I go there all by myself, actually with [chosen] one of my boys. In the near future, I would like to go there at least with the whole group of Church Council, the most influential in our church, so that the most influential in our church may meet and greet the most influential from many other faith communities from the world.

Some of you may say, “I don’t need to be influential.” Others may satisfy with an ordinary life-style. One thing that I’ve learned from the pastoral ministry or my church life is the fact that God calls ordinary persons like you and me and makes extra-ordinary for His kingdom!

I hope our time for next several weeks help us learn about how we become like Easter people – the most influential people for God’s Kingdom.

John 20:19-31 ¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, **when the disciples were together**, with the doors 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 side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he **breathed on them** and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ **If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven**; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

²⁴ Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ 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.**" ²⁶ 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!"

²⁷ 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.**" ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "**Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**"

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

The scripture lesson this morning talks about what happened on the Easter day. John's gospel tells us about a couple of gathering. It seems a Sunday evening worship service.

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What Jesus did at the evening assembly were three things:

First, Jesus came and stood among them and said: **Peace be with you!** Jesus comforted those who were scared to death of Jews, instead of the Romans. **Jewish Christians feel deadly afraid of other Jews.** **Saying Shalom**, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were happy when they saw the risen Lord, Jesus.

Secondly, Jesus commissions the disciples, as His father has sent him.

John 3:16-17 ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he **breathed on them** and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, his message was the act of forgiveness. The scripture sounds like forgiving what the people did to Jesus on the cross.

²³ **If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven;** if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

In God's eyes, all need to be forgiven for salvation! If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven! **Jews are not forgiven, if the Jewish Christians don't forgive them.**

Knowing that the gospel was written later 90s of the first century when the persecution took place among the Christians, the message of the act of forgiveness should apply for the persecution under the Roman Emperors, Nero and Domitian of the 90s.

65 Martyrdom of Peter and Paul
70 Christian Retire to Pella [Jerusalem Destroyed by the Romans]
95 Persecution of Christians by Domitian

The gospel covers a couple of more things. Let's find a couple of lessons from the scripture.

1. *The risen Jesus revives the hopeless with Holy Spirit. (Cf. Genesis 2:7)*

The gospel writer John, discover something unique from the risen Lord, Jesus. Jesus appeared to the disciples who were scared to death and revive them with the Holy Spirit. Jesus breathed them the breath of life.

John 20:21-23 ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that **he breathed on them and said,** "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Genesis 2:7 ⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,** and the man became a living being.

His revival act is not simply for an act of consolation, but the act of commissioning. Jesus revived the disciples and sent them for the act of forgiveness. **The amazing love for the forgiveness to those who hate them is what the risen Lord, Jesus wanted his people to show.**

**Do you want to save someone in your household?
Do you want to bring someone at your work to the joy of salvation?
Do you want to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ?**

**You have to love those whom you hate?
Love them with all your hearts, all your minds and all your strengths. Love them unconditionally. Love them like Jesus and you can bring forth God's Kingdom!**

2. *Easter people struggle with ones who reject the resurrection of Jesus.*

At this time, Thomas appears to the group.

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ 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!"

The scripture doesn't explain what would happen with the appearance of Thomas to the rest of the disciples. We can assume a bit. What we know from the scripture includes a couple of things that:

1) Other disciples told him, "that they saw the risen Jesus, Lord." The expression the disciple uses is important. Jesus is called as the Lord, a title for God the Divine! Thomas rejected with all his minds and with all his strengths.

"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."

You want to help just one other member of the church for a particular incident. It is not easy, because a person like Thomas reject it. **"I will not believe it."**

Such situation is the dilemma that today's Christians face. Our young children reject the resurrection of Jesus, because they cannot accept what they didn't confirm with their senses.

They don't see things, they do not believe.

They don't hear with their own ears, they do not agree with you.

They don't touch with their own fingers, they do not accept the situation.

Even a police officer questioned about me when I gave an explanation of a guy who hit and ran about a month and half ago.

Preachers are speaking about the resurrection of Jesus. People still don't accept.

Preachers love to give the most powerful force for their beloved, their parishioners do not take it.

Parents love to give something good, their children just reject it.

Easter people struggle with the one who reject the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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."

3. The Risen Lord returns in the life of the church, who helps those who have hard time to believe with patience.

It is good news. The risen Lord returns in the life of the church. For the church can help those who have hard time, believing Jesus as the Son of God. With patience, the church will convince others to believe that Jesus Christ as the Son of God!

This is about evangelism. Our task is to help others who reject what God did through Jesus Christ to believe.

Often we forget our primary task.
What is the primary task of the church?

Fellowship is not the primary task of the church!
Pretty often the church confuse with the secondary reasons why they gather. I see that people pay too much attention to less important value.

The primary task of the church to proclaim that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, therefore, those who believe in the risen Lord, Jesus will have life in his name!

If the church fails to carry out the primary task, the people in the community do not expect that the church can help their primary concern. None feel the significant role of the church in their lives. That's the end of the church!

4. Miraculous signs are administered for us to receive the Risen Lord, Jesus.

The gospel writher, John's concern, draws our attention from the first and last chapter of his gospel.

John 1:10-14 ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The most significant purpose of the entire gospel is for readers to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, by believing that they may have life in his name! The gospel has one more chapter, chapter 21. But, the

conclusion of the gospel is right there. All the teaching from the gospel is for readers to believe.

This claim is not simply made for the first century, but for the 21st century. This claim is not simply made for someone else, but for us.

Miraculous signs are administered for us to receive the Risen Lord, Jesus.

If we do not receive the Risen Lord, how can we convince others to receive him?