

John 20:19-31

<sup>19</sup> 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!" <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

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

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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.**"

<sup>26</sup> 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!" <sup>27</sup> 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."

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

<sup>30</sup> Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> 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. (NIV)

My brothers and sisters in Christ, but especially Boys and Girls of the 2007 Confirmation Class, if you keep track of the news one of the hot topics this week had to do with a radio personality in New York. I've never heard of Don Imus, but he is famous, and he made a comment on the radio about the Rutgers women's basketball team that insulted black people, insulted women, insulted a sports team, and offended many other people of a decent mind. As the furor got worse the team was asked what they thought, or if they could forgive him. They said they could not speak until the radio personality came to them first, which I think he did on Thursday. Of course, by the time he met with them, he had been fired. You see how this worked though. He did something wrong, so he had to come and apologize. That's usually the way that people think.

Now look at Thomas. Thomas had done wrong. When the other disciples deserted Jesus, Thomas did too. When the others doubted his rising, Thomas did too. But, after Jesus appeared to the other 10 disciples, when Thomas should have finally started believing, knowing that Jesus was God, this is what Thomas said, **"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."** He had chosen and decided not to believe in Jesus and his rising, and his victory over sin and death.

So, did Jesus say, 'I won't forgive him until HE comes and apologizes to me?' No, Jesus came to the disciples specifically when Thomas was there. Jesus knew Thomas' doubts, and his statements of decided unbelief. But Jesus came to Thomas, and showed his hands, and Jesus showed his side, and Jesus called Thomas to believe, and to be saved. When Thomas deserved scolding, if not punishment from Jesus, Jesus took the first step, and Jesus forgave Thomas, and Jesus loved Thomas, and Jesus called Thomas back to the job of being an Apostle.

Now, before I go any further, I want to tell each of you, each of you, that I am proud of you, in a way a Christian can be proud. The congregation might be surprised. They have heard me talk of my struggles with the class this year. Some of you have learned the lessons easily, but you did your work. Others struggled. I think that there was no one I didn't have to ask to stop talking or pay attention at least once. But, each of you have stuck with it, and grown in your knowledge of Jesus, and today you will confess your faith the way Thomas did, 'My Lord and my God.' I'm proud and thankful for your growth.

Have you done anything that Jesus needs to forgive? Yes each of you have, and I am sure each of you will. But, you know what, Jesus is different than the rest of us, he is the way we should be, when we are sinners, he comes seeking us to forgive us, and love us, and save us.

You may think today is about you, about you being confirmed, about you confessing your faith, about you finishing confirmation classes. But, today is really about Jesus. Because when the world was sinful, Jesus came to earth, he died and rose to save us. When you were born sinful Jesus called you in baptism. When you sinned in life, he continued to call you to repentance and faith and forgiveness. When you acted up at times in Confirmation Class, Jesus continued to call you to learn of His love. When you confess your faith today, it is not because you are faithful, but because Jesus is faithful and has kept calling you.

Let me tell you about Thomas. The love of Jesus changed his life. He became a missionary. Christian tradition has it that Thomas went to India, and was killed there for being a Christian, and when the first European missionaries started arriving in India they found the church of St. Thomas. Today Jesus is coming again to call sinners, you and me, to His love. I pray that you may continue to know that even when you sin Jesus calls you to repentance, and faith, and forgiveness, and eternal life. And I pray that Jesus loving call will change your life, every day, and eternally.