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BELIEVING JESUS IS LORD AND GOD  
John 20:19-31; Easter 2B; April 6-7, 2024

**Eight days later, [Jesus'] disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!"**

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
**He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

**Eight days later**, one week after Easter as is today, Thomas was with the rest of the disciples and saw Jesus alive and confessed his faith: **"My Lord and my God."** "By grace [we] confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God" (Easter 2 Collect of the Day).

Receiving this faith in Jesus is the reason why John wrote his Gospel, which he makes explicit in today's account of Jesus appearing to His disciples and Thomas after rising on Easter. **These [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God** (which you might recognize as the Setting Four Alleluia Verse), **and that by believing you may have life in His name.** God wants us to believe Jesus Christ is Lord. We must believe also that Jesus is the Son of God, which is to say with Thomas: Jesus is God. By having this faith in Jesus as Lord and God, we receive life in His name. Today's focus is on the risen Jesus Christ who is Lord and God, and the life that is given to all who believe in Him.

This brings us face-to-face with two great mysteries of the Christian faith: the Incarnation and Holy Trinity.

We confess in the Nicene Creed that Jesus Christ, God's Son, was "incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man." "Incarnate" means, "in flesh." What John wrote in chapter one of His Gospel, which we hear every Christmas Day, teaches the incarnation: **The Word became flesh.** God the Son took on the flesh of man through His mother Mary. Jesus is true and God and true man in one person, the incarnate Son of God.

Paul in 1 Timothy 3 noted of the incarnation: **Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh** (3:16a). The mystery of the incarnation is that Jesus Christ is true God and true man in one Person. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe this about Jesus. They believe that He is another god with the Father but does not share the same nature with the Father. They believe that Jesus was born human and became a god but was not true God eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Their false teaching on the incarnation denies the true doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Trinity is the other great mystery of the Christian faith. God is One in Three Persons. There is only one God from all eternity, without beginning and without end, and that one God has three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three Persons are equally, eternally, and inseparably God, yet are not three Gods, or Lords; there is one God and one Lord. I don't know about you, but my mind starts to spin when I try to figure this out. If I do the "math" of the Trinity – one Father plus one Son plus one Holy Spirit – the total should be three, but it is One. There is one God. This is a mystery.

Every human attempt to explain the mystery of Holy Trinity ends up explaining it away and denying it. This is also true of the mystery of Jesus' Incarnation: the Word become flesh, the God-man who is One God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, yet neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit became man.

With Thomas, we believe and confess of Jesus: **"My Lord and my God."** We confess the faith that Jesus is true God and true man in one Person. Our Lord Jesus Christ is true God with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity, and He is true man, born of the virgin Mary. This is the Christian faith which saves us. Without this faith, no one can be saved. To believe in any other god condemns someone to hell. Jesus called Thomas as an apostle to confess this faith as a witness to His resurrection. Thomas wouldn't believe without first seeing Jesus alive – a luxury that none of us has – but seeing, he gave us a beautiful true confession of faith: **My Lord and my God.**

What does it mean for us and for our salvation that Jesus is Lord and God?

**These [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.** The Lord Jesus is also the Christ, the Anointed One of God. Jesus is the One promised by God to be born the Son of David and rule on David's throne forever. Jesus is the One promised by God to be born in Abraham's line to bless him, his descendants, and the whole world. Jesus is the One, after Adam and Eve were tempted and fell into sin, that God promised to be born of a woman. He would bruise/crush the serpent-devil's head at the expense of His own heel being bruised, a reference to Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.

When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He won the victory over the devil, sin, and death for us. We see this victory in His resurrection from the dead. How could one man, even a good man like Jesus, save the whole world? The Christ is not only Mary's Son, but also God's Son. What no sinful man could do, the God-man accomplished.

This is behind Thomas' demand to see the marks of the crucifixion on Jesus' hands and side. Unless the One who could raise the dead by His Word was Himself raised from the dead, there was no point in believing in Him. Thomas had witnessed Jesus raising others from the dead, Lazarus for example – one of the many **signs** Jesus had done to show who He was and what He came to do – but what good was that to Thomas if Jesus was not alive? Thomas was still going to die.

Tradition says that Thomas made it as far as the subcontinent of India and spread the Good News of Jesus to those people. After building a church, he was martyred by an angry pagan priest for refusing to worship the gods of the people. Thomas was stabbed with a spear and died, like His Lord and Savior was stabbed on the cross after His death. Thomas the believer was not afraid to die for the sake of his Lord Jesus Christ.

We are ready to die with Jesus and for faith in Jesus. He suffered and died on the cross for us and rose from the dead to save us. Our Lord and God became man, took our sin and death onto Himself, suffered, died, and rose to life, so our sins are truly forgiven, and our lives have been restored to us eternally. God Himself died and rose for us, and we trust that, because we died with Him in Holy Baptism, we will also rise to live with Him forever.

**These [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is... the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.** John says that we have life **“in [the Son’s] name.”** This points us to our baptisms **“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”** We have life now and forever in this Name.

The life we have is one of **peace** with God and each other through the forgiveness of sins. This is what Jesus announced when He appeared alive to the disciples on the first Easter evening and a week later when Thomas was with them. **“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.”** And when He had said this, He **breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.”**

The **peace** of Jesus, the Son, is from the Father who sent Him and the Holy Spirit we receive from Him: the Holy Trinity. God’s peace is given by the forgiveness of sins, which is for all. *Luther’s Small Catechism* in the Confession and Absolution and Office of the Keys Chief Part quotes these verses on the institution of the Holy Ministry of the Church for administering forgiveness in Jesus’ name.

Holy Baptism in this Name gives us forgiveness and peace. Holy Absolution, from the pastor as from God Himself, forgives our sins. Every Christian can and should forgive in Jesus’ name sins against him or her, and those sins are forgiven. The Gospel preached and taught, heard and believed in the Church, forgives our sins. We are invited to eat and drink the body and blood of the incarnate God in the Lord’s Supper for the forgiveness of our sins and God’s peace.

When the pastor holds before the Church Christ’s body and blood, we hear what Jesus said to His disciples while He showed them His wounds from the cross, the *Pax Domini*: “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” Our “Amen” to that “Peace” is our confession of faith in Jesus. By eating and drinking His body and blood we are forgiven. We have peace now and are promised eternal peace with God in the “resurrection of dead and the life of the world to come.” We confess what we believe of Jesus: **“My Lord and my God.”**

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!** Amen.