



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, APRIL 12, 2026

EXODUS 15:1-11; PSALM 111; 1 PETER 1:3-9; JOHN 20:19-31

## MY LORD AND MY GOD!

**John 20:19-31** [*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, 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. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.]*

Western Christendom has long referred to St. Thomas the Apostle as "Doubting Thomas," and aside from the few times he speaks in the Gospel of John, that's pretty much where his story ends. The Eastern church tradition has a far more vivid imagination about our forefather in the faith.

The apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* tell of Thomas' mission to the far East, to India. The apostle is depicted as a man who boldly lives for Jesus. I do

mean boldly – with maybe just a tiny dash of Robin Hood thrown in for good measure!

Thomas marches into the courts of kings to baptize royal households, while suffering no qualms about lightening an overstuffed royal treasury to give to the poor. Between adventures, he composes epic Christ hymns and when the need arises, he talks to donkeys!

In 72 C.E., legend has it that St. Thomas was martyred in Southern

India. His witness continues to shape Christian communities all over Central Asia, where he is remembered not for his unbelief, but for his confident profession of faith.

I experienced Thomas' enduring legacy of faith in Sri Lanka when I visited there in 2024. My friend and seminary classmate, Fr. Samuel Ponniah, a priest of The Anglican Church of Ceylon, reminded me that Thomas' deepening conversion wasn't a private or solitary event.

Thomas' encounter with the living, resurrected Christ happened only *after* he was reunited with his fellow disciples in community. The apostle would not have missed Jesus' first appearance to the disciples were he not separated from the others.

At the same time, John gives us this story precisely because Thomas needs his own proof – proof, by the way, that Jesus is more than happy to give. Through Thomas, John's Gospel offers this evidence down the Millennia to the present day.

Interestingly, it's not clear whether Thomas accepted Jesus' invitation to touch his wounds. The fullness of Christ's presence was enough.

Thomas moves not so much from doubt to belief as from unbelief – total, trauma-induced unbelief – to belief. He goes even deeper than belief. He trusts. He trusts the

presence of Christ, both familiar and new. He trusts and recognizes – in other words, he abides in Christ as Christ abides in him.

The agony of pain and grief he carried after the crucifixion, along with Mary Magdalene, Peter, Mary the Mother of Jesus, and all of the other disciples, was simply too much to bear.

There was no capacity for even the slightest glimmer of hope. Jesus' followers were too vulnerable to risk false hope. They were desolate, utterly in shock from losing their teacher, Lord, and friend.

The miracle of Easter is the power of Christ showing up in that locked little room of fear and devastation – a room with which I know we're all familiar – and restoring Thomas and the disciples to belief, and more than that, to life. Life in Christ.

Thomas' newfound recognition makes him declare, "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas' confession of faith fulfills a theological arc. The Prologue of John tells us the Word was with God and *was* God; Thomas confirms this at the Gospel's end.

"My Lord, AND my God."

But he is also making a dangerous political point. In the Roman world, "Lord" was a title of exclusive allegiance to Caesar. By declaring

Jesus as Lord, Thomas explicitly denies lordship to the false idols of Empire.

I acknowledge that the word “Lord” has its own freighted connotations for many of us. However, when we say “The Lord be with you,” or pray in the name of “Our Lord, Jesus Christ,” we are making that same revolutionary claim: Christ is our Lord, Caesar is not.

The corruption, bigotry, nationalism, and war-mongering of Empire must never find sanctuary in Christian faith. A Christianity that accommodates any of that is counterfeit.

This brings us to our own Easter crossroads. Today, the bishop is gone, throngs of smartly dressed people are somewhere else, probably at brunch (and we love them no less for it). The spectacular floral stagecraft is still lovely, if a bit more modest. How do we live out authentic faith when the brass and timpani have gone silent?

We do well to take Thomas as our guide. He teaches us to begin by asking for the presence of Christ. The Far Eastern Christian tradition celebrates Thomas for his pragmatic request for proof of the resurrection. Can we relate? When Jesus tells the disciples, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe,” he’s not asking for

uncritical allegiance. My friends, faith is grace, always grace.

Ask for it.

Thomas’ story reminds us to come back, and keep coming back, to our community of faith. Look at all these beautiful faces who showed up on “low Sunday.” Well done, my friends! Together, we’ll abolish that unfortunate moniker.

We pray. We pray at home, in nature, in the car – wherever we can enter into conversation or quiet contemplation with God. And of course, we pray together, in church, as Christ’s Body.

We worship. We hear God’s Word, and invitation to worship at God’s Table.

To recognize Christ in the Eucharist is also to recall our dying and rising with Christ at our baptism. This is sacramental memory; it need not perfectly align with individual memory, for it is far more powerful than that.

The muscle memory of meeting Christ in the sacraments is the grace by which the Holy Spirit empowers us to live out our baptismal covenant with God. Holy Communion helps strengthen and quite literally *en-courage* us to declare that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.

Finally, like Thomas on his mission to the ancient Indian sub-continent, we carry the resurrected, living Christ out to a world that is desperate for something real, something that is not death, something that gives life.

We richly and triumphantly celebrated Easter last week. It was, as it should be, glorious. But Easter is not only contained in history. Today is Easter, my friends. Today is *always* the day for us to join our voices with Thomas and exclaim: “My Lord and my God!”



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