



⁹When 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.” ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy

Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So 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.”

²⁶A 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.” ²⁷Then 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.” ²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But 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.

From the gospel for Sunday, April 7th, 2024 (Easter 2)
John 20:19-31

My mother used to say to me, “Sweetie, sometimes I think your mind is like a sieve.” Ever hear that? What she meant was that I seemed to let the really important stuff go in one ear, and out the other. Like a sieve.

But the unimportant stuff – the trivial or useless stuff – man, I could keep that stuff locked away forever. Like a steel trap. One of those many meaningless things I’ve stored away in my porous brain years is this.

Someone once asked me...can’t remember who...was what was the one door that Superman...Superman, couldn’t break down?

Now, I’m talking Superman, the one who’s able to leap tall buildings with a single bound... faster than a speeding bullet.

More powerful than a locomotive. Remember that Superman?

Now I had no idea what the answer to this ridiculous question was. So he told me...the one door that Superman couldn’t break down was...the door to the ladies restroom.

That’s right. Either that door was Superman’s Kryptonite, or else he was just such a gentleman that he couldn’t bear the thought of breaking down that one door.

Which naturally brings us to our gospel today. It’s Easter evening, and the disciples are gathered together in a house.

The doors to the house where the disciples were gathered were locked for fear that the temple leadership might discover them and charge them with sedition, and suffer the same fate as Jesus.

Or maybe they just needed some time to decompress from the events of the past few days. They’d heard that Jesus had busted out of his burial tomb. Arisen. But where was he?

What would he look like after what they saw on the cross? After all, it was a grizzly scene at Golgotha that day.

What would happen to them if the temple leadership saw them with the risen Jesus?

And so in this locked and bolted room in this house, there sat the disciples.

You can imagine the conversation around the table.

What do we do now? Where's Jesus? Was he really risen from the dead? What's in store for us now? Are we guilty by association?

And through that locked door walks Jesus, as he faces his disciples. Jesus, in his torn and tattered flesh. Nail holes and all. Dried blood caked to his flesh.

He'd just endured rejection, hatred, disbelief from the crowd that sent him to the cross...and now, appearing before his closest friends, he's getting the same treatment. Rejection. Disbelief.

They certainly weren't shouting alleluia, Jesus Christ is risen today! Like we sang last week...but more like, umm, who are you really? And...where are you?

If Jesus was the Messiah, God in the flesh, could God die, and still be God?

So maybe Jesus wasn't God after all, they could have been thinking.

Maybe they felt they'd been had by Jesus!

Maybe they were afraid for their own lives at the time, and that they might be next to face the cross.

The symbolism in this resurrection appearance of Jesus in John's gospel is palpable. Not even death itself was going to hold him back from completing what he had been sent by the Father to do.

And that was to bring all things under God's right hand.

And so nothing...not death, not locked and bolted doors, not disbelief or doubt, could keep Jesus away from his beloved disciples.

John's message for us today in this post resurrection scene is clear. And that is that there is NO door, not even the door to the ladies restroom, that Jesus can't break open.

There is no heart too hardened...there is no amount of doubt or rejection or denial...no belief too wobbly, that the love of God in Jesus Christ can't overcome.

There is no heart so hardened by the world that the gospel message of love your neighbor can't penetrate.

There's no place so tightly guarded that the love of God can't infiltrate.

Even that of the human heart.

I know that some of you have friends, or even family members, who you think might seem like one of those early disciples – locked and boarded up, hiding from the possibility that Jesus might show up, refusing to let Jesus into their lives.

Maybe they've given up on the promise that Jesus of life beyond the grave that Jesus offers, just like the disciples did.

Maybe even you've felt it too, at times. Unsure. Uncertain. Wallowing in disbelief...doubt.

But John's message for us on this second Sunday in Easter is this – there is no place, no place that is too far removed for the Holy Spirit to find you.

Like the parable of the one lost sheep and the 99...like the parable of the lost coin, the Holy Spirit will find you and claim you.

God will move heaven and earth to find us wherever we are, and claim us as his own.

There is no heart that is too hardened...no life too far gone...no sin too heinous that the Holy Spirit won't find you and redeem you.

There is nowhere that we can go, as the baptized in Christ, that God won't find us and breathe his peace upon us.

We can turn away. We can deny that Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

We can flee from the church.

But God, in Christ, finds a way back to us when we're lost. When we're alone. When we're afraid. When we doubt.

Even those closest to Jesus – his disciples – were afraid. Didn't believe. Didn't trust that the risen Christ was who he said he was.

But we are here in this church some two **thousand years later**, because they came to belief in this locked and bolted room, when Jesus breathed his spirit on them.

In fact they **couldn't contain themselves** with the good news of the risen Christ once they believed.

There is no door too secure...there is no heart so broken...there is no barrier so high...that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit can't break down.

For God so loved the world. For God so loved us. You...me.

That's the promise of Easter. Amen.