

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

The disciples are gathered behind locked doors, frightened, wondering, and then Jesus comes among them and said "Peace be with you." He shows them his hands and side, they rejoice because now they know the Lord. Jesus says again "Peace be with you." Then he adds "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." He breathes on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit." The Greek word *pneuma* means breath, spirit, or even wind, and Jesus breathed on this community of disciples.

Now we have some drama in this story, of the eleven remaining apostles, only ten are there, one named Thomas is absent for whatever reason. We can probably all imagine his reaction when he sees his friends and hears their news, maybe we can hear ourselves saying with Thomas "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." Because the truth is, there's some Thomas in all of us to one extent or another, we'd like proof that we can see, touch, hear. Yes, we're saved by grace through faith, but wouldn't some tangible proof be nice? After all, we live in an age where it seems unless you live in a state of denial, nearly everything is compared, analyzed, dissected, filmed and preferably put on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or Twitter.

Mystery is abandoned by so many and it gets harder all the time to believe, Thomas might have done very well in our day and age! But then the resurrected Jesus, appears again a week later, today in fact, and meets Thomas' demand. As before, he appears and said "Peace be with you." And he tells Thomas to reach out and touch him, "Do not doubt but believe."

Thomas doesn't need to touch, he simply answers "My Lord and my God!" It's not only Jesus but the Christ of God, he doesn't need to touch, he sees and he believes, he sees the scars of the suffering undergone at the hands of humans, he sees the Christ, the Messiah who though he hasn't sinned himself has carried the sins of humanity into death. Thomas sees that death has died, that Christ, the light of the world has triumphed.

Then 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." The Incarnation and the Resurrection are real and changing the world even though it's not always evident yet. The disciples have received the Holy Spirit, the very breath of God. They are sent by Jesus even as the Father sent him, they are to bear witness to the Resurrected Lord by proclamation and sharing the Good News!

Yes, we live in a cynical, disbelieving, unbelieving, unwilling world, but then the disciples of that time and place lived in a world that believed in even more gods that the world today believes in, some of them the same of course e.g., money, status and power, but others different. But in spite of actual threat to life and wellbeing, the

faith will spread from Jerusalem and Judea throughout the known world. Now, surrounded by doubters, naysayers, scoffers, we are strengthened and energized, filled by the presence and power of Christ who has breathed the very breath of God, the Holy Spirit into each one of us in our baptisms, strengthened through worship and the Word, fed in Holy Communion, and we more aware than ever of the needs of the world around us, the suffering, deprivation, violence and hatred, need more than ever to share the joy of the resurrection, that others may also through believing in Jesus, have life in his name.

AMEN