

St. Peter Lutheran Church  
April 12, 2026  
Second Sunday of Easter  
John 20:19-31

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! **He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Listen to that description of what Ezekiel experienced in the Spirit of the Lord. Dead, dry bones being reassembled, sinews and flesh coming upon the assembled bones, and skin covering them. In the beginning, God had formed the man from the dust of the ground, but following the fall into sin, He said, “You are dust and to dust you shall return.” So death reigned in Adam and the sons of Adam. But Ezekiel sees dead people being raised back up, reformed, and breath being put back into them, and an exceedingly great army living again.

This is one of many prophecies that had a fulfillment even before its complete fulfillment. It spoke of God’s people, Israel, being gathered from the nations in which they had been exiled and returned to the land which God promised them. This hope was all but dead, but God promised it, and God fulfilled it.

But there was a greater fulfillment to come, when Christ who fulfills all that is written, comes. In Christ, the fulfillment of death’s defeat and man’s recreation happens. The resurrection of the dead happens in Christ, so that the scene seen by Ezekiel now will really happen—the dead will be called out of their graves, the seas will give up their dead, and they will all stand again—an exceedingly great army. And those who belong to God, Israel, will be gathered into their promised inheritance—the new heavens and the new earth.

All this is as good as done even now, for Christ is already raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who fall asleep. What happened in Christ will happen soon to all of humanity—the dead will be raised—**those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.** When Christ was crucified and died for the sins of the world, the graves couldn’t contain their dead at this seismic event—**the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.**

So while the general resurrection of the dead remains a future event, it has already occurred in Jesus. The End has already come. Judgment has already been rendered on the cross. The old has passed away and the new has broken forth. In God’s patience, the death of this age is slow, even as the resurrection in Jesus Christ is already reality.

But God is about the business even now of bringing people out of death to life in Jesus His son. What was accomplished on the cross is now given to the world in Him. Dead people are made alive in Him—for in Him, our sins were crucified, and in Him, we have been raised to newness of life. He breathes His Spirit into us, bringing us from death to life—making us alive together

with Him. For the Spirit works the gift of faith in Christ's death and resurrection for us and for our salvation. We are regenerated—born of God—given saving faith in Christ—by this faith, we overcome the world. We will be gathered out of our graves at the Last Day, God will make us new again and put breath back in us, and bring us into the promised inheritance.

Christ, appearing to His disciples on that first evening of the Day of Resurrection, declares to them the peace His cross has secured. **“Peace be with you,”** he says. I died for your sins and I was raised for your justification. **“Peace be with you.”** **When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.** The marks of the nails were evident in His hands, and His side showed where the spear had been thrust into Him, the very place where blood and water had rushed out when His life was given for the life of the world. As surely as He now lives and reigns is as surely as your sins are forgiven.

**So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send 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 any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”**

As Christ was sent to bring life to the world by his death and resurrection, the apostles are now sent by Christ to deliver that blood-bought life. They are sent to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the three who in heaven bear witness. They are to teach all that Jesus commanded, bringing His Word to the people. They are to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins. And when anyone hears them and believes, they are to give to them Christ's forgiveness in Word and Sacrament. Whoever receives them receives Christ. But whoever will not hear, will not believe, and will not repent, they are not to be given Christ's forgiveness. So by this ministry established by Jesus, some are brought to life by the Spirit, and others reject God's salvation, grieve the Spirit, and die eternally.

Thomas was not with them that first Lord's Day. So when the disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord,” he said, **“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”**

The apostles are distinct from the ministers of the Gospel who follow them. The apostles are witnesses. Thus John, in relaying to us the events of Jesus' death, writes, **“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.”** So by the testimony of the apostles, there are three that bear witness on earth: **the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.** For it really happened. He truly died, and He truly rose, and the testimony of the witnesses is confirmed by the Spirit.

So Thomas was made a witness—**after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said,**

**“Peace to you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and My God!”**

Thomas believed because he had seen. And this was necessary, that their testimony is known to be true. But Jesus speaks of all of us as blessed. He says, **“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** We, who have heard the apostolic testimony, the witness concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection—we have heard about the water and blood that came from His side, and we have heard that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. That life-giving torrent of blood and water is not found for us at a cross on a hill far away—if it were, we missed it and it’s gone—but rather, that life-giving flood is found for us in Holy Baptism, in the Gospel preached to us, in the Sacrament administered. The peace of the cross is not found in relics of wood but in the absolution spoken to you today. The body and blood of Jesus is not found in a grave, for He is risen. It is found for you here in the cup that we bless and the bread that we break. Christ is here for you today, granting the peace He won by His death and resurrection.

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. **Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.**

Believing, you have life in His name. By this Spirit-given faith, you overcome the world. You already have risen to new life in Him, so though you die, yet shall you live. For we know that our Redeemer lives, and at the last Day, we will stand again with flesh on our bones and have breath returned to our bodies, and then, with our own eyes, we will see Him, and exclaim with Thomas and the twelve, and all who have believed through their testimony, **“My Lord and My God!”**

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