

*Worship Resources

2^{ns} **Sunday after Easter Year A,**

19th April, 2020

Psalm 16 NRSV /John 20:19-31 NIV

Intro / Prelude - *Nearer, My God, To Thee* - written by Sarah Flower Adams,
performed by church pianist Annie Center

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Welcome to worship with Olympic View Community Church. This morning, we continue to share our worship together online. As we continue to explore this new format together, I hope that you find these services meaningful, and I am always open to, and would greatly welcome any feedback or suggestions you might have.

We will continue to monitor the situation in our state, and will let you know when we are able to get back to reopening our building, and resuming our gathered worship there. All services and events, including our Spring General Assembly, are postponed until such time as we can safely gather together in person.

This morning, let's try something a little different. Normally, we would take time at the beginning of our service to pass the peace of Christ to each other. Since we can't greet each other in person, let's instead think of those we would like to offer peace, whether those in our church family, or others we can think of who would benefit from the sharing of peace today. Feel free to say their names aloud, to pray for peace for them, or simply think a peaceful thought for them silently. Let's take a few moments to pass the peace to others from wherever we are, while Annie plays an interlude for us.

Pass the Peace/Interlude - *Just As I Am, Without One Plea* - written by Charlotte Elliot, performed by church pianist Annie Center

Let's take a deep breath, quiet our minds and hearts, as we light a candle to represent the Spirit among us. Let us call ourselves to worship.

Call to Worship

so we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away,
Our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary
affliction is preparing us Because we look at not what can be seen, but at
what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, But what cannot be
seen is eternal.

Invocation

Join me in our invocation prayer.

Holy God, Nothing is beyond your power to transform! In a gray dawn, you
coax songs of Alleluia! From the tombs of despair we take refuge in You call us
to wake up and work. We praise you for this amazing day! Come, Risen
Christ, in newness and hope on this Eastertide morning. **Amen.**

**Our first scripture this morning is from the Psalmist. As the Psalms were written
to be sung, it's appropriate that we hear these words of faith and trust in God, put
to music. Listen and enjoy.**

Psalm of the Day *Psalm 16* NRSV

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."

As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight.

Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of
blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly
heritage.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not
be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.

For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.

You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your
right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Scripture Video - Psalm 16 Song with Lyrics - *No Good Apart From You* Jason Silver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbdUbyo8IRY>

A Time of Prayer

So as we come to our normal time of sharing prayer together, we find ourselves sharing together from a distance. From my conversations with some of you, I have included those concerns shared in our prayer today. If you have items you would like lifted in prayer, please leave a comment below, or email myself or the church office and I will make sure to include them next week, as well as send an email, unless directed otherwise.

Joys and Concerns

This morning, let's take joy in the creative way that those among us are finding ways to find laughter and amusement in the stress of isolation, such as the Bisterfeldt's who find ways to get outside on excursions, or celebrate Spirit week in creative ways at home.

Let's also take joy in Gracie being able to have her great-granddaughter stay with her and lift her spirits

Please continue to keep Roger and Kathy Edmark's grandson Josiah in prayer for continued improvement, as well as expressing thanks to God for the blessings he's received. His recent testing indicated positive results. In addition, his medication that was initially so prohibitively expensive has been reduced to a more reasonable monthly amount.

But let's also keep those of us who are struggling right now under restrictions, particularly those in senior living arrangements, but also those separated from their loved ones.

Also those who are struggling to battle this illness, like my neighbor in the same building. Let us also keep in prayer those around them, that they may stay well.

Prayers for the family who runs Card Exchange, which runs tournaments for collectable card games. Their son Connor has died this week of COVID-19. Connor was always there, helping kids learn how to play cards - a beautiful soul. He was in his early twenties.

And let's also remember those who are not able to work, or work fully right now, that they may be able to get all their needs met.

With all this in mind, let us take a moment and share together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

Join me in prayer.

Holy One, we confess that it has been too much. There is too much loss, too much fear, too much grief, too much despair. There's only so much we can handle and it is overwhelming us. Help us, O God, to let go of the fear that holds us in its grip and instead cling to hope.

Help us, O God, to acknowledge our doubts, and yet to trust in You, to know that You are with us, and we are not alone.

Help us, O God, to have faith that this too shall come to pass. Guide us in this time of uncertainty to focus on You, our Rock and our Redeemer.

Impossible God, You make all things possible. You make all things new. You called forth light when Your Spirit hovered over the waters, and there was light. You breathed into dirt and brought forth humanity. You raised Christ from the tomb. You continue to bring forth life out of death. You raise flowers from the earth after the cold winter. We know You will bring forth life again. In this time, may we deepen our trust in You.

May we strengthen our faith in humanity that love can overcome fear and hate. May we broaden our understanding of love to all who are in need. May we rise from this time with lessons learned and strive to build a better society of kindness and caring. May we remember those who are risking their lives to save lives, and those who are keeping our society running and making it possible to have food and vital services. May we our part to ensure their health and safety now and in the time to come by working for justice for all, for living wages for all, for healthcare for all. Impossible God, may we learn that nothing is impossible with You. We can change the world because of You. We can love one another without hate because of You. We can become a new creation because of You. Remind us, teach us, and guide us. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though 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; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Gospel Video - *John 20* ALLAUDIO BIBLE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgXzizl8U90>

Message - Rev. Glenn A. Brumbaugh

How many of us have doubts in our lives? I would wager most of us would agree that doubt is a part of life. While the ideal would be to be sure of everything we hear, learn, or encounter, the reality is that experience teaches us to often think twice before we accept circumstances as they appear.

We've all heard that when “things seem too good to be true, they usually are.” To use another common cliché, we are conditioned to take most things “with a grain of salt.” The reality is that life is full of challenges, and we all bear scars from experiences in our lives where we were disappointed, where things did not work out as we expected. When life gets challenging, we naturally can be subject to doubt. We can doubt the wisdom of our choices, the actions and good intentions of others, and even the benevolence of our God and Creator.

But when it comes to matters of faith, there is often the subtext that to have doubt is a bad thing; that to question why things happen the way they do, is somehow a sign of weakness or a lack of commitment. But is it really? Is questioning our

experience of the Divine a bad thing? There is plenty of doubt in our gospel story this morning. We often focus on “doubting Thomas,” but he is not alone.

In last week's reading, Mary Magdalene told the disciples of her encounter with the risen Jesus, yet obviously they didn't take her seriously. They were just as surprised when he popped up among them, and didn't believe until they saw him in the flesh. So Thomas shouldn't get a bad rap for wanting to have the same verification, for having his doubts in a story that sounded too good to be true. Too often we equate doubt with a lack of commitment, particularly in matters of faith. Yet Thomas was clearly committed to the cause, albeit a solid realist at the same time.

When Lazarus dies and Jesus heads for Judea to raise him, a mission that will ultimately end in his own death, Thomas grimly declares, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” When Jesus, on the verge of his crucifixion, tells the disciples that they know where he is going, Thomas is straightforward enough to say that, in fact, they do not. He is by no means a person of unsteady conviction, but someone who is willing to face and to name the evident difficult facts. Which is a role he continues to fulfill in this story. Like the other disciples, he has his doubts.

The promise of the last few years seems to have been too good to be true. The glorious revolution they thought was beginning under the leadership of their rabbi Jesus seems to have fallen apart in disaster. Now they find themselves hunted, hiding in a locked room. Yet here Jesus appears, resurrected and back from disaster, with the wounds to prove it. A lot of the narrative focuses on those wounds, which is an important detail.

We often think that the promise of redemption and “no more tears” in heaven implies that all trace of the trials and imperfections of our earthly existence is gone. Yet here Jesus is, with the holes in his hands and side still there and not simply wiped away, proving that his path to glory was no cake walk. He too, suffered from things not working out as expected, and he too, had his doubts in the garden.

Thomas, the realist, sees the validity in acknowledging that Jesus bears the signs of his suffering; that like them, he had his own scars to bear. But he also sees the hope that offers.

Those trials prove that Jesus endured the challenges of a human life. He bore the scars of tough times and desperation, yet his return also gives evidence of renewal and hope. Those struggles, even his death, was not the end of the story. There was renewal. There is hope. Thomas, in his doubt, makes this story real. He makes this encounter human and accessible. He finds the real hope in the most desperate of situations.

Where do we find our hope in our own desperate situations, in our own locked rooms? For most of us, if we're honest with ourselves, have our own doubts right now. Not only from our current situation, but with the situation our churches have found themselves in recently. Certainly these are desperate times. Isolation, and

loss of income are making things tougher and tougher. At the same time, our beloved congregations seem to be dwindling and dwindling, making us doubt that our tradition will survive. We find ourselves in much the same situation as those early disciples: locked away, afraid and alone, despondent and without much hope. Yet as Jesus points out, we have had to believe all along, sight unseen. We weren't there in that locked room, we didn't have the opportunity to see the wounds, to witness that Jesus was scarred like the rest of us. But the truth revealed in that story still applies to us. We follow one who knows what it is to suffer, to have doubts, and to bear the scars of a life that doesn't always meet our expectations. One who knows what it is like to feel abandoned and alone. But also one who found resurrection and renewal. One whose suffering led to healing and hope for generations to come.

Perhaps the greatest fallacy we encounter in our faith walks is that our journey is meant to be flawless and without hardship. We often like to portray the ideal Christian as one who is without doubt, walking in a perfect serene confidence that everything has a purpose, and that every bad turn has a silver lining. Is that ever anyone's lived reality? Yet that's often the persona we put on. We play the role as the doubtless faithful follower without human struggle, often criticizing the Thomases among us who try to keep it real by being honest about their struggles.

When people bear witness to those hardships, we often feel uncomfortable and embarrassed, and would like to ssh them. Perhaps that is why the church has such struggles now. People on the outside see the utopia that we try to play with each other, and it comes off as being the shallow illusion it often is. Maybe it's more Thomases we need, not less. We are all struggling in these difficult times.

It's important that we are honest with ourselves, and as people of faith with those around us, that to have difficulties, to have doubts, is to be human. A strong faith is not one without doubt, but one that sees the hope that is possible. The hope of resurrection and renewal on the other side. The strength to explore those doubts and find the truth that tough times are not the end of the story.

The motivation to work to make this time and place in the story one that leads to redemption on the other side. The question is, are we ready to be real? Are we ready to admit our doubts, to ourselves, and to each other? Are we ready to listen and affirm the doubts of our brothers and sisters, and sit together in those questions, to lose the stiff upper lip we often like to portray? After all, we follow a savior who struggled, who doubted, yet found resurrection.

I hope we can find ways to show our own struggles and doubts to others, as those early disciples did. I hope we can find ways to offer the same hope to those around us who struggle as we do, to show that the story never ends in hopelessness and despair. And I hope we can work together to find new life through the scars we acquire in times such as these, in a community of doubt-full faith. Amen.

Call to Serve

Easter teaches us that generous love is at the heart of God's work. Joyfully we are able to give knowing that our gifts will help others to see the blessed miracle of God's creative joy. If you'd like to support this ministry with your resources, offerings and tithes can still be mailed to the church office, or donations can be made through the link in the video description. As we continue to be beacons of God's grace in continuing to support our staff financially, and showing leniency to our tenants, we are stepping out in faith and relying on the grace of others. May you give prayerful consideration to how you can support our faith community in these difficult times. As we listen to the following selection...let's reflect ...

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [video] *Give Us Your Peace*

performed by Jesse Manibusan and Sarah Hart on "The Commons" at spiritandsong.com, uploaded to YouTube by rfeduccia
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1oJLj3OLoA>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving God, can a generous prayer be lifted up to you this Eastertide?
Can these gifts, given with love, be further transformed like echoes of grace,
delighting all who receive their blessings?
May it be so, through the surprising power of your Holy Spirit,
and may our lives speak of a loving God, full of Easter surprises. Amen.

Benediction/Blessing/Assurance

Christ is the one who died on the cross, but also laid in the tomb of death for three days. Christ knows our fears, what it is like to feel trapped, what it is like to live without hope. And yet, Christ rose, and we will rise. Christ lives, and we live now and forever. Christ loves us, and calls us to love one another. Live into this hope by loving one another, and trusting that Christ is with us, through all things, and will see us through. Amen.

Postlude: - *Lift High the Cross*

written by George Kitchin, performed by church pianist Annie Center