

**Sunday 7 April 2024 Warragul UC,
Low Sunday in the Easter Season
Easter Journeyings**

A Reading from the Gospel of John 20: 19-31 (paraphrased) Faye, Chris

Narrator When it was evening on that first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples met were locked for fear of the authorities, Jesus came and stood among them:

Jesus Peace be with you.

Narrator After he greeted them, he showed them his hands and his side.

ALL **Peace be with you Jesus, it is so marvellous to see you**

Jesus Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. I breathe on you, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.

Narrator But Thomas, who was called the Twin, and was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him:

ALL **We have seen the Lord!**

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.

Pause

Narrator A week later, the disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut and Jesus came and stood among them.

Jesus Peace be with you. Thomas, put your fingers here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt, but believe.

Thomas My Lord and my God!

Jesus Have you believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and who come to believe.

Narrator Now Jesus did many other signs 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.

Narrator In these words we hear the Word for our living and our loving

ALL **Thanks be to God!**

Reflection

Easter Journeyings – Thomas and change

(Please note that the words now are not identical with the printed text – journeys continue)

What has brought you here? What's happened in your Christian journey?
What has happened in some of the Easters in which you have participated?
Margaret and I met at an Easter church camp
I've had the privilege of leading worship in at least 40 years, possibly 50 or 60 services
And you?

That's part of your Easter journey, what you have done, what has happened around you, where you have worshipped, the holidays you've had, the times you were in hospital, the people with whom you have spent time.

But what about your Easter journey of faith?
How has your faith developed and changed over the years? Is it still the same as in 1950 or 1970 or even 2000?
When you were a child – or in a couple of cases, whilst you are still children – what did you think about God, about faith, about Easter bunnies or bilbies?
Do you have the same questions now in 2024 or do you ask different questions? Does the same imagery help you?
In our unique journey, your journey, my journey, each of us, we can be certain of 2 common chords – firstly, Jesus is there – constant, loving, hopeful as the dying and

rising Christ even at those times when we are not sure about it and secondly, each of us

What was the journey of the first women and men who were friends of Jesus – the several Marys and the other women, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, the remaining 11 men who had travelled with Jesus with Thomas as a man of special note. It began in shock, awe, terror, bewilderment and a nagging sense of something massive.

As we heard, for Thomas it was personal – Jesus spoke to him uniquely, specially. It was embarrassing, it was revealing, it was life-changing.

For the women doing their duty going to the tomb to embalm Jesus' body it was scary and mind-boggling.

For Peter it was also embarrassing – after all it's only a few days since he denied that he even knew Jesus, in front of witnesses who knew he was lying. But Jesus singled out Peter with a personal invitation to come and see the empty tomb, to come for forgiveness and to be accepted, to take on a leadership role in the new era

For all of them it was challenging – so challenging it took years for them to get it sufficiently sorted out in their minds and hearts. So new, so unexpected, so upside down.

We are used to hearing the story, it does not surprise us any more. But that does not make

it less real, it just means we have to focus in different ways.

Where is God this Easter? As we said, it is Low Sunday. The high celebration of Easter Day is wonderful, necessary, part of the journey. Part of that imagery of Low Sunday for me is that God is present when the going gets tough. God is along the way, even in all the seemingly intractable problems of the world and of our own lives:

Where is Christ in Vanuatu - the school and chapel building, in the recovery from cyclones?

Where is Christ in Gaza? Where is Christ in Israel?

Where is Christ with drug addicts and in mental illness?

Where is Christ in the Kremlin and Kyiv?

Where is Christ in your anxiety about the environmental future of our planet?

With Thomas, we ask questions, we seek to hear the answer and we pray that we will respond as Thomas did – not denying the urgency of his questions, but getting on with being a disciple, travelling to tell people of the good news he experienced.

Where will the highs and lows of this year's Easter take you? Where is God calling you?