



WEEK ONE: John 20:19-31

Eastertide The Resurrection Life: A Brief Introduction

In the church calendar, Easter (or Eastertide) continues until Pentecost (seven weeks after Easter, May 24). It is a period in which Christians are encouraged to reflect on the joy, transformation, and celebration of the resurrection.

During this series we will be following the lectionary readings (The lectionary is a three-year cycle of readings with four readings assigned to each Sunday; one from the gospels, one from the epistles, one from the psalms, and, usually, one from another part of the Old Testament.). The preachers each week will choose one or more of the texts as the basis of the reflections on the resurrection life.

The lectionary readings for this series are in the table below. If you would like more information you can use the following link to learn more: <https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-6-YearA-UCA-Lectionary.pdf>

Date	First Reading	Psalms	Second Reading	Gospel
April 12	Acts 2:14a, 22-32	Psalms 16	1 Peter 1:3-9	John 20:19-31
April 19	Acts 2:14a, 36-41	Psalms 116:1-4, 12-19	1 Peter 1:17-23	Luke 24:13-35
April 26	Acts 2:42-47	Psalms 23	1 Peter 2:19-25	John 10:1-10
May 3	Acts 7:55-60	Psalms 31:1-5, 15-16	1 Peter 2:1-10	John 14:1-14
May 10	Acts 17:22-31	Psalms 66:8-20	1 Peter 3:13-22	John 14:15-21
May 17	Acts 1:6-14	Psalms 68:1-10, 32-35	1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11	John 17:1-11
May 24	Acts 2:1-21 OR Numbers 11:24-30	Psalms 104:24-34, 35b	1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 OR Acts 2:1-21	John 20:19-23 OR 7:37-39

Sermon Outline:

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): John 20:19-31

This is an important text for GBC – “As the Father sent me, I am sending you” – but also contains the well-known story of “Doubting Thomas”. In John’s gospel, Thomas is usually further identified as “Didymus”. Both names mean “twin” and John’s intentional reference to it has led scholars to speculate whether there was another brother or sister – Thomas’ twin – who was known in the early church, or whether Thomas was a doppelgänger for someone else (Jesus?), or whether John is using the term “twin” in a literary or metaphorical way. This last one may be at work in this passage as there are quite a few doublets/twins in the narrative (e.g., both Mary and the disciples say they have seen the Lord, Jesus shows the disciples his hands and side twice, he greets them with “Peace be with you” twice in the first encounter, and the disciples are gathered twice with the door locked – once without Thomas and once with him).

We don’t know where Thomas was on that first evening and John doesn’t shed any light on it. Thomas is mentioned elsewhere in the gospel where he is willing to die for Jesus (11:6) so we would be forgiven for assuming that he is not afraid of the Jewish leaders (or at least, not as afraid!).

When he returns (or when the disciples find him) and is told that they too, along with Mary, have “seen the Lord” he makes an emphatic declaration. “Unless I see the nail mark in his hands and put my fingers where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

A week later – an unexpectedly long time for Thomas to stew in his doubt – he is with the disciples in the same locked room when Jesus appears (again). Jesus doesn’t accuse Thomas, nor berate him, but urges him to touch his wounds, to stop doubting and begin to/continue to believe (more on this in a moment).

Thomas, confronted with Jesus, doesn’t need to touch his wounds (or at least John makes no reference to this) but, instead, makes the declaration that John has been building to since the prologue – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (emphasis added).” (1:1) Thomas is no longer “doubting” but “declaring”!

Jesus then speaks to the disciples – including us, who stand between the two meetings, having not seen the Lord physically – and calls ‘blessed’ those who believe without having seen. Faith based, not on sight, is not secondary or derivative, but ‘blessed’!

The gospel concludes (though there is a postscript of sorts) with John speaking directly to the reader, saying that he has written the gospel so that the readers might begin to/continue to believe (the Greek verb can be translated either way – and shapes how we understand what Thomas was urged to do.).

This story is, of course, another account of an encounter with the risen Jesus, but it is also a profound encouragement to those who have doubts. Doubt, whether it stems from a lack of personal experience or an act of self-protection to avoid disappointment or as a way to attempt to control the situation, is unsettling and difficult to navigate.

It is critical, however, to recognise that doubt – in this case, Thomas’ – is not unusual, nor is it condemned. In fact, it is important to remember that God can handle all of our questions and doubts! The fact that one of the twelve apostles would doubt provides space for our own questions. Importantly, Thomas works out his doubt with the other disciples – a very important model for us. Too often we can allow our doubts to isolate us or marginalise us, but we should navigate them with other believers. (As an aside, for those who are not currently experiencing doubt it is so important to allow others to ask their questions and express their doubt and walk with them in that – not condemn them for not having faith.)

One final word. Sometimes – as in this story – it is the work of God that causes the doubt! Sometimes, doubt can be the place where God does some of his most significant work in our lives. Perhaps you’ve had this

experience: when your “Sunday School faith” has been challenged and you’ve had to work out what you really believe. This unsettling place can lead to a deeper, more vibrant, and mature faith.

Let us take Thomas’ example – and Jesus’ compassion – to heart as we “work out our salvation together.”

Questions to Ask

1. John repeatedly calls Thomas “Didymus” (the twin), and the passage itself is full of “double” moments (two appearances, repeated greetings, repeated testimony). How might this idea of “twin-ness” invite us to see ourselves in Thomas? In what ways do you identify with him?
2. Thomas refuses to believe based only on others’ testimony and wants personal experience. What are some reasons people struggle with doubt today (intellectual, emotional, past hurt, etc.)? Which of these resonate with your own experience?
3. When Jesus appears again, he doesn’t shame Thomas but meets him where he is. What stands out to you about the way Jesus responds? How might this shape how we respond to our own doubts—or to others who are struggling?
4. Thomas moves from scepticism to one of the clearest declarations in the Gospel: “My Lord and my God!” What do you think caused that shift? Can you think of a time when wrestling with questions led to deeper faith rather than weaker faith?
5. Jesus says those who believe without seeing are “blessed.” What does it look like to live out a faith that doesn’t rely on physical proof? How can we encourage one another to grow in that kind of faith while still being honest about questions?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other, that you might experience the joy and transformation of the resurrection.

A Practice to Try

Choose one of the first steps you identified in Q. 6 above and implement it this week.

Readings to Read This Week

Read the remaining texts from the lectionary and reflect on how they interact with each other on the themes of the resurrection life (see the Table above).

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Given that this week’s reading begins with the statement that is over our door – “As the Father sent me, I am sending you.” – this would be an excellent mission commitment to reflect on. Where is Jesus sending you this week? What is he sending you to do?

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. On Sunday May 17 we will be launching an Alpha group. The group will meet during our regular church service time. If you have a friend who you think might be ready to explore faith in this setting, make sure you speak to Adam Stewart about getting involved (along with your friend).