

**Second Sunday of Easter
April 7, 2024 Dorset Church
Rev. Steve Longley**

Light of the world,
shine upon us
and disperse the clouds of our selfishness,
that we may reflect the power of the resurrection
in our life together. Amen.

Thank you Phil for reading Scripture this morning.

There are some Scripture readings you remember your whole life long.

Jesus appearing to disciples,
who were huddled on the other side of a **locked door**,
and of **Thomas**, is certainly a very memorable scripture
account.

I recall being about five-years old when I first heard this story.
What I didn't notice then, but I do now,
are Jesus's words as he enters the room...
"Peace be with you"...
the same words we shared when we greeted
each other a few minutes ago.

Second, I now notice the gift Jesus offers us...
the gift of life...that gift Jesus shared when he
"breathed onto his disciples,"
saying "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The image of Jesus breathing onto his disciples reminds us
of the creation story in the book of Genesis...
when God formed Adam out of the dust
and “breathed into his nostril the breath of life.”

Through Jesus we too participate in God’s creation of our world.

But back when I was five,
my focus then, and it remained for many years afterward,
was on the word ‘doubt’ and on ‘doubting Thomas.’

As that five-year-old, what I recall most clearly
was Jesus’s question to Thomas, which, unfortunately,
I heard then as a **rebuke...**
a **shaming** of Thomas...
that Thomas was person of **“little faith.”**

Somewhere along the way, I mixed up Jesus’s question,
and inserted the word ONLY, hearing Jesus’s question as
“Have you believed ONLY because you have seen me? .

But Jesus’s intention was not to criticize Thomas, was it?

No, Jesus’s words are meant to commend, and encourage,
all the generations of Christians...like us...who will come to
embrace the living Christ without physical evidence.

As Paul writes in the letter to the Romans
“faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes
through the word of Christ.” (Paul)¹

¹ Romans 10:17

My point in sharing my childhood misunderstanding of Thomas is to cast light on the experience of **noticing things** that you, and I, may have previously missed, or avoided.

I learned a new word the other day that I want to share with you: **habituation**.

“Habituation is our brain’s tendency to respond less and less to things that are constant or change gradually.

For example, you enter a bakery and after about 20 minutes you can’t smell the scent of warm pastry anymore. Your olfactory neurons simply stop responding.”²

Similarly, just as you got used to the scent of fresh bread, you also get used to the ride of that new car you purchased, or the stunning view of Equinox and Mother Myrick, right outside your window.

What was once **amazing** becomes mundane. You **habituate** it, because you stop **noticing** it.

All this habituating can result in us feeling **stuck... fearful and paralyzed...like Jesus’s disciples, “locked behind the door”** before they were reassured that the person at the door was actually Jesus.

^{2 2} Reignite the Sparks of Joy Hidden Beneath Your Well-Worn Habits, Cass Sunstein & Tali Sharot, <https://nextbigideaclub.com/magazine/reignite-sparks-joy-hidden-beneath-well-worn-habits-bookbite/48193/>

Reassurance helps us humans confront uncertainty,
by providing the confidence to move from paralysis to action.

When we lose our fear of the unknown, we enter the light.

The contrast of dark and light can be intense,
forcing us to notice the contrasting realities that we
sometimes gloss over, **or habituate.**

So, how can **we dis-habituate?**

The answer is, we must start **looking again,**
and noticing the gradual changes that occur around and within us.
“We need to re-discover the sparkle in the mundane.”³

God calls all of us to see the world through fresh eyes,
so that we might be delivered by the promise
of **the new life that Jesus** has so lovingly provided.

When we spend time together in fellowship,
we re-learn of healing power of Holy Spirit...
noticing, feeling, and reflecting...
on God’s movements among us.

When we notice **our new perspective on things**
we ready ourselves to face any feelings of abandonment,
pain or grief that comes our way.

Noticing the new, and casting out the habitual,
helps deliver us to a common place...

^{3 3} Reignite the Sparks of Joy Hidden Beneath Your Well-Worn Habits, Cass Sunstein & Tali Sharot,
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that fork in the road where we we-learn how
to re-discover the joy of **re-discovering** all that is
subtle, sublime, ever-changing,
and awesome...like our God.

Let's re-discover that awesomeness and allow it to **re-sparkle the world
with brilliant light.**

Prayer of Pastoral Care Easter 2 April 7, 2024 Communion

Psalm 133 reminds us: "*How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity.*" Living God, giver of life, hear us as we pray, saying,

Pour out your blessing, O Lord;
send out your Spirit of peace.

Breathe in this place, O Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, to open our minds, unlock our hearts, and enliven our faith so that we may welcome the risen one among us in our lives and in this place. We pray for the church. Let your church be a living sign of the woundedness and healing of Christ, sharing the gift of forgiveness, and sharing the gospel of reconciliation.

Pour out your blessing, O Lord;
send out your Spirit of peace.

We pray for the earth. Help us to see the scars of death that mark your good creation, and to seek the blessing of life that you offer to all creatures. We pray for all refugees who are deeply impacted by drought, by severe storms, and other effects of global climate change. We thank you for all who welcome and care for migrants and asylum seekers. Strengthen the witness with governments and peoples to preserve the earth our home.

Pour out your blessing, O Lord;
send out your Spirit of peace.

We pray for all nations. Show us how good and pleasant it is when people live together in unity. We pray for the

more than 190 aid workers who have died in Gaza, and for the international team delivering food to World Central Kitchen feeding sites in Gaza who were targeted and killed this week. May this tragedy lead more quickly to a cease fire. We pray for all nations caught up in violence and war in our world.

Pour out your blessing, O Lord;
send out your Spirit of peace.

We pray for this community. Give us a vision of the common good. May we seek the fullness of life for all. We pray for voter's rights and the defense of democracy in our country and world. We lift before you those on this church's immediate needs prayer list. ...

By the blessing of your Spirit, help us to live as we pray so that the world may come to know the gift of life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERING We remember the first believers who shared one heart and soul, and distributed their possessions to all in need. In the same spirit, let us present our offerings at the feet of the risen Lord.

*DOXOLOGY

*PRAYER By your Spirit who breathes within us, strengthen our faith, use our gifts, and work in our lives to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

