

# ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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## JUST ASKING (FOR REAL)

**The Rev. Andrew F. Kline**

Text of a Sermon preached Second Sunday of Easter

April 24, 2022

ACTS 5:27-32 | PSALM 118:14-24  
REVELATION 1:4-8 | JOHN 20:19-31

Peter could understand what Thomas was feeling. He felt it that whole first day, especially as the sun was going down. He too had felt like he had missed it. He had raced to the empty tomb with the beloved disciple. He was the one who stepped in. He noted the strange light, the eerie silence, the echo of angelic voices. He touched the burial linen, neatly wrapped to the side, to make sure it was real.

And the women! They wouldn't shut up. About the shock and surprise. About the angels. Mary Magdalene in particular kept saying. I have seen the Lord! I didn't know it was him at first. Then he said my name. I have seen the Lord.

Later that night, all that seemed like a dream, when locked behind closed doors they sank back into their fears and their grief. What next? Peter knew one thing. It sure felt as if they would never speak the name of Jesus again on the street, in the public square. Nobody wanted to hear from them.

Peter remembered Jesus telling him that something like all this would happen, but that he would have to understand the Scriptures differently. He kept going over certain parts of Mary's story, especially about how when she tried to turn to greet Jesus, to fall at his feet and hold him for dear life, he had asked her to stay back, to keep some distance, to realize that he was in the process of going somewhere, as if changing clothing, putting on new shoes, holding one thing in one hand, and balancing another thing in the other. Breathlessly, but quickly moving on, changing focus, form, purpose.

He said, we will have time for this later, as for now, please go, go with all haste, go quickly, and tell them that you have seen me and that I am coming to them. And then he was lifted from her sight.

On the street he had heard about the temple veil being torn in two. He even thought he heard low voices whispering about stranger sightings in the city and on the road out of town. When he stopped to ask, they turned away. Quiet!, they barked. They are going to arrest anyone who mentions his name.

Peter looked around. Not everyone is here tonight. Some decided to get a safer distance and headed out the road to Emmaus. And Thomas! Where has he gotten to? I give him credit. He is much more curious than the rest of us. He is always asking questions. He remembers what Jesus says. But he never takes things at face value. No doubt he is out there tracking down the body, looking for more clues. Anything but listen to those women going on and on about their visions.

And then it happened. Just as we were sitting down to supper. He appeared right through those closed doors. Coming up to each one of us, closer than he had ever been before. He said: Shalom. Peace.

Everything is alright and will be alright. Then, he said in a single sentence what was happening, not from our point of view, but from God's point of view. The Father has sent me to you, to see with your own eyes what has happened to me. Now go, and tell the world. But before we could even wonder what that meant, he breathed into each one of us, the cool, enervating, wind of a new world, the beginning of a new creation.

And the strangest thing of all, is that this new thing was not about how to interpret this or that passage of Scripture, or about how blind we had been, or about any of the past. No, it was about how his presence made all the difference. The betrayed, shame, abandoned, murdered victim had returned. And literally given us new life. One word. Forgive. Or don't forgive. But by all means, you are forgiven. Now go, loose the world from its chains. This is all that matters. New life, breaking out in this old, weary world.

Peter thought. You really have to appreciate Thomas. No, love him. His determination. His respect for the truth. He returned the day after Jesus first appeared to us, listening to us, and the others who had turned from running away, tell him that they too had seen the Lord. Thomas was incredulous. He told us over and over to search the scriptures. As if breaking bread with a stranger, who suddenly reminds you of the dearest person you have ever lost, is proof of anything.

Thomas was right to insist. If Jesus has risen, then he has been changed. Everything has been changed. And we should somehow be invited into that transformation. If the living God has really been among us as flesh and blood, I should be able, somehow see it with my own eyes, handle it with these fingers. Surely he has borne our iniquities and infirmities, but what else does it mean?

Peter remembered: At the same time of the evening, as they were about to sit down and eat, Jesus appeared to Thomas. And everyone was smiling. Thomas not only got answers for himself. Indeed, because of his great honesty, his profound curiosity, he was going to help so many others believe what had been unveiled, what could not be imagined until just now. He had shouted clearer than any of us: "My Lord and my God!"

He had not even needed to reach out and touch Jesus. But Jesus came so very close, just had he had with us. He breathed into him the spirit of the new creation, the wind that had torn the veil of the temple in two, the breath that will raise the dead at the end of time. You, too, Thomas, are beloved, forgiven, sent. Now out there and share this news.

Especially to those who are the seekers, the knights of faith, who are not afraid to ask the questions that lead to life. True life. Abundant life. Life without end.