



**Midweek Service of Word and Prayer
Grace Lutheran Church
Lincoln, Nebraska**

Opening Dialog

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. **Alleluia!**

We are enlightened by the brightness of his rising. **Alleluia!**

Death's darkness has no power over us. **Alleluia!**

Introduction to Sunday

The seven Sundays of Easter season explore the mystery of Christ's presence, mostly through the Gospel of John. This Sunday we gather with the disciples on the first Easter, and Jesus breathes the Spirit on us. With Thomas we ask for a sign, and Jesus offers us his wounded self in the broken bread. From frightened individuals we are transformed into a community of hospitality, peace, forgiveness, and generosity.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection. By the grace of Christ among us, enable us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings

Acts 4

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

When have you experienced the power of a common goal? What made it happen?

1 John 1

⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

When has sharing the faith brought joy to you? Why?

John 20

²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

What has been more difficult? Understanding what you have seen or what you have not seen?

Reflection

Wounded Resurrection Power Restores Community

Jesus' resurrection confronts the sadness and loneliness of Thomas's doubt. Many people in congregations left last Sunday's celebration of the resurrection with feelings like those of Thomas. Somehow, Thomas was not in the right place at the right time to see Jesus show up in the flesh. No doubt, people in the pews can relate to Thomas's missed opportunity.

Perhaps they were unable to attend a family Easter gathering. Maybe a bunch of friends had box seats to the hottest game in town, and they were not able to afford one. Maybe a chemo treatment interrupted an opportunity for career advancement. Human beings are endlessly plagued with feelings of not fully belonging to the group, and they desire a savior to use magical power to restore perfection.

Time and again, the disciples seek a messiah who overwhelms them and the world with crushing military might and magical cures. Today, the power of the resurrection is most realized in the real, deep wounds of Jesus' own body. Without those wounds and the real sacrifice that God made on the cross, Thomas's faith would always be hobbled by his overwhelming doubt. Yet people still ask: how can God's reality of overflowing love and life confront and transform our parched world and wounded bodies?

Jesus makes faith happen today by breathing the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and blessing them with peace. He shows Thomas and all God's people that the life-changing resurrection embraces the wounds all people carry. God the Creator's peace, Jesus' wounds, and the breath of the Holy Spirit lead Thomas to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. Then, Thomas trusts God to care for his body and his life. Just like Jesus' ministry prior to the cross, Jesus reaches for the outsider and restores Thomas to his place in the community. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (together)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Apostle's Creed (together)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended to the living, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Responsive Prayer

Show us your mercy, O God,

and grant us your salvation.

Give us the joy of your saving help again,

and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit.

Give peace in all the world;

for only in you can we live in safety.

Keep the nations under your care,

and guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth;

your saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy be forgotten,

nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us a clean heart, O God,

and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Lord, hear my prayer,

and let my cry come before you.

Closing Prayer

O God, in you we live and move and have our being. Guide and govern us every day by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but remember that always we are walking in your promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Blessing

Almighty God (+) bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.