

**A Sermon for The Second Sunday after Easter
April 27, 2025**



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[Second Sunday of Easter – The Episcopal Church](#)

John 20:19-30

There is a famous painting of this Gospel scene, where Thomas receives his own visit from the Risen Christ. Caravaggio, the super realistic baroque painter, captures the scene when Christ returns to the disciples with Thomas present, and shows Thomas his wounds, physical proof that Christ is indeed the same person who suffered on the cross. The painting is very powerful, as befits this powerful proof of the resurrection.

The painting shows four figures, Christ with three disciples, Thomas in the foreground. Christ is guiding Thomas's hand towards the gash in Christ's side and urging Thomas to insert his finger into the gaping wound. Two other disciples are also fully focused on this moment of physical proof, all of them focused on seeing and touching in order to believe. The artist Caravaggio emphasizes the poignancy of belief, of Christ responding fully to Thomas's need for proof.

Our Gospel writer John gives us this scene immediately after the dramatic encounter of Mary Magdalene and the Risen Christ on Easter morning. That scene is also full of physicality – Mary in tears, the Christ meeting her with great sympathy for her distress, of her desire to touch him and cling to him, of his gently telling her to let him go.

Christ's wounds are very important, in the Gospel narrative as in the painting. The focus is on the pain of the crucifixion.

On Easter Sunday morning, we rejoice in the resurrection, shouting our alleluias and enjoying the flowers of springtime, aglow in their own return from being buried in the earth. Easter Sunday is truly sanitized. We rejoice in the resurrection, and we can forget the crucifixion. Hooray for Easter! Forget about Good Friday.

Alas, we cover over the pain to our own detriment. The Resurrection is not a shiny thing, all cleaned up and glorious. Rather, it contains all the marks of the bloody events that went before. That's why this scene is so important.

In 12 step programs, like Alcoholics Anonymous, this tendency towards coverup is called denial. We deny that there was, or is, a problem. Until the wounds of alcoholism are acknowledged, there can be no healing.

Right now in our country there is a movement to cover over the sins of our society, to deny that we ever had slavery. Sanitizing history does us no favors. It is better to be honest and tell the whole story. There are many wounds in our society right now, resulting in tremendous anger. We need to hear all the stories, to understand our current events. Pretending that American history is all glory is

a dangerous and explosive undertaking. I know about history. It is truly better to be honest about what has happened, and to look at all the wounds.

We are an Easter people. We celebrate new life, the coming of new life in the midst of life, of new life in all its forms. We would do well to remember all the wounds it took to get us this far. Our positive nature should also be realistic. In the long run, this realism will enhance our appreciation for how far we have come. This honesty can bring us to reconciliation, the true peace of Christ.