

**A Sermon for the 2nd Sunday after Easter
April 12, 2026**



New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH

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Second Sunday of Easter – April 12, 2026

Sermon by Troy Dunn

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus is Risen! Alleluia! The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia! Yes, we are in the joyous Easter season. We are an Easter people; we are a Resurrection people; we are a New Life people! But, what did it take to get here? We just went through 40 days of Lent, then entered into a most solemn Holy Week, culminating in the three most holy days of the liturgical year known as the Triduum (Tri meaning 3) where we remember and reflect on the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Try to imagine for a moment what the disciples and other followers would have been going through at that time. They have followed this man Jesus during the 3 years of his public ministry, they've seen his miracles first hand, they've heard his words every day, they ate with him, stayed with him, believed in him – to various degrees. They were human. Did they understand everything Jesus was about? Most likely no. Did they have their doubts? Most likely yes. Did they struggle? Sure they did. And they persevered through it all. But then everything they thought they worked and hoped for came crashing down. They saw Pharisees and Roman authorities come after Jesus. They were astounded that one of their own could actually betray Jesus. They heard the chants of the crowd against Jesus. They saw him arrested, and tried, and flogged, and

condemned to be crucified – a most horrendous humiliating death. They freaked. They ran. They denied. They abandoned the man they loyally followed for years. Only the two Marys and young John remained at the foot of the cross. Tomb. Shroud. Burial. Darkness.

In last week's Gospel we heard that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found it empty and went to tell the others that the tomb was empty and she saw Jesus; she actually saw Jesus, risen, alive! Peter and John run to the tomb to see it for themselves. To physically see it. Empty. But they didn't see Jesus, yet. Then we find them today, afraid, the door locked at the house where they were staying. Were they scared? Were they feeling guilty? Were they now lost? Were their spirits crushed? Absolutely confused? I'm sure all of the above. Imagine the questions. Is this real? Is it true? Is Mary crazy? We didn't see him. Did they perhaps forget Jesus's promises in his prior farewell discourse when he said, "You will weep and mourn and be in anguish" but then goes on to assure them, "I will come back to you" and "you will see me." Then... despite the door being locked, there is Jesus in their midst! Shock! You're supposed to be dead. You were buried in a tomb. Confusion. Am I crazy? What am I seeing? His first words to those gathered = "Peace be with you." Up to this moment they were not at peace; now Jesus offers that peace in his greeting. Then he shows them his hands and his side. What? No way man! Are you kidding me? Rejoicing ensued! Then Jesus again says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit..." Now at this point we are not yet at Pentecost, the coming of the promised Paraclete that would come and stay with the Apostles after Jesus is no longer with them. So what is this? See Jesus is still with them at this point; he has not yet ascended. The Paraclete that he promises will be with them is to come after he ascends. If you

think about it, breath is life. We read in Genesis that God breathes life into his creatures. Here Jesus is breathing new life into them in preparation for what's next. Jesus draws his disciples into his own mission; he commissions them as envoys. The Church is an extension of the work of the Father and the Son in the world. The Holy Spirit consecrates the disciples for their new mission. Wow, so much going on here. You talk about something not to miss!

Oops, of all times to miss an occasion like this, who misses out? Thomas, oh poor absent Thomas. For centuries Thomas has been called Doubting Thomas and I think this designation does him a disservice. We've all been there. But I think "absent" Thomas is a better designation. You miss out on something, then you hear the stories people are telling each from their own perspective. Some people minimize facts, some exaggerate, some stories seem like pretty tall tales. You may not know quite what to believe. Thomas is a man stumbling in unbelief. He needs hard tangible evidence, proof of these stories he's hearing. He's even a little rebellious, "I will not believe." He needs to see for himself kind of like Peter and John needed to see the empty tomb for themselves. I think we can all find in Thomas someone like us. We've all had moments when we needed more clarity, more assurance, more faith, more of Jesus. Thomas didn't hide his questions or doubts; he spoke them out loud boldly. However, beneath his questions we see courage.

So, what happens a week later? The disciples are again gathered with the door shut, but there is no mention of fear this time. And there appears a second time, Jesus, who again begins with the greeting, "Peace be with you." Thomas doesn't miss out on this one! Jesus knows exactly what Thomas needs, and he gives it to him. "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." These wounds are

the same ones he now examines on the resurrected body as those of the body that died on the cross. Then Thomas proclaims the strongest confession in all of Scripture. “My Lord and my God!”

When we dispense with this Doubting Thomas label, and examine other encounters with Thomas in the book of John we find that he is a loyal friend, a brave follower, an honest seeker, and a bold proclaimer. Let me talk up Thomas a bit for you. When Lazarus died and Jesus was ready to travel back to the dangerous territory of Judea, it is Thomas who exclaims, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” That was loyalty. He was willing to follow Jesus into risk. Then Thomas was the one who spoke up when Jesus spoke of going away to prepare a place. Thomas asks, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” His questions open the door for Jesus’s answers as in this case when Jesus responds, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Thomas simply wanted to understand. When Jesus appeared that second time and gave Thomas what he required to believe, Thomas didn’t offer excuses about his doubt; rather, he makes a bold proclamation and an act of worship. Thomas was the first to proclaim Jesus as both Lord and God after the resurrection. Church tradition tells us that it was Thomas who carried the Gospel all the way to India and ultimately died there as a martyr. This was not a man paralyzed by doubt. He was transformed by truth. Thomas had quiet courage as he chose faithfulness in following Jesus, but he was willing to speak up at key moments when it mattered.

Our vocabulary is full of words that indicate we need proof beyond just believing. Unless I touch... Until I see... When it becomes real... Then... When Thomas remained in his doubt, I mean he missed out at first and was left behind in his grief and confusion, Jesus did not shame him – Jesus challenged him. “Do not doubt and

believe...Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” This statement was not only directed to those present, but by extension, to later generations of disciples. It is the apostolic witness to Jesus who received the tangible proof whose testimony is given to later generations in the words of the Gospel. Doubt or questioning is not a sin, but lingering in it can leave us stuck, and staying stuck can lead to hardened hearts and rebellion as we’ve seen with other figures throughout Scripture. (Pharaoh during the time of Moses and Saul who becomes Paul come to mind.) God doesn’t fear our questions or our need to understand. He answers, “Put your finger here...reach out your hand....” Thomas stayed, waited, wrestled, and responded in faith. Digging deeper when we doubt can cause our roots to grow stronger. Jesus meets us where we are. Jesus came to Thomas. He called him forward to experience the real physical tangible Christ. It is Thomas’s movement, as it is for us future believers, to Easter faith.

Death has been conquered, evil destroyed, but we are still in brokenness. Whether it’s in doubt, unbelief, a myriad of questions, our attempts to understand our little and our big sins. However, the Good News is that we are in a time of witness and truth. A time of waiting and watching for the second coming and the hope of our own resurrection. We now bring what’s broken in us to the Lord to be healed, to bring what is in shadow into the light, what is in darkness to be seen. What a time! We are made holy even though we remain broken. Many early church fathers often commented on the story of Thomas not as a condemnation of his doubt, but as a profound act of God’s mercy and a model for the faithful. St. Gregory the Great says, “Thomas’s doubt was not a failure, but a necessary step toward deeper faith.” St. Augustine sums it up in his sermon 258,

part 3: “By putting his hand into the body of Christ, Thomas perfected his faith. The fullness of faith is to believe that Christ is both man and God. The disciple was offered the scars of his Savior to touch and when he touched them he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” Thomas touched the man, and recognized God.” May those 5 profound words be our Easter proclamation going forward. Peace be with you, and believe!