



What if I told you that today,  
*the Sunday after Easter*

was really **the day** to celebrate  
in the life of a Christian?

Would you believe me?

Because the more I think about it,  
the more I'm convinced it is the truth.

We think Easter is the day

for all the flowers, nice clothes, the deviled eggs,  
but hear me out on this.

Our text this morning

is masterful in getting this across;  
it starts out on the evening of Easter,  
and ends up where we are today,  
a week later.

So if we are still on Easter,

if we start out on the evening of that glorious day,  
here's how the story according to John goes:

Mary goes to the tomb early in the morning,  
discovers that Jesus's body is gone,

tells Simon Peter and the other disciple

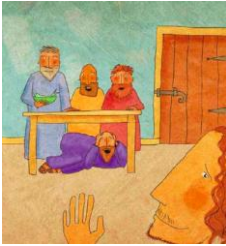
-the one Jesus loved-  
and they run to the

tomb.

It is just as Mary said,  
empty.

The male disciples leave, but Mary stays  
weeping outside the tomb.

When she sees Jesus,  
    though-you remember,  
        she thinks he's the gardener;  
when she sees, realizes it is the Lord,  
    Jesus tells her to go and tell the others  
        and we hear the first Easter proclamation,  
    "I have seen the Lord." (John 20:18)  
    Mary is the apostle to the apostles.<sup>1</sup>



All of that happened in the early morning,  
    and that is the last thing we hear about that day  
    until now—when it is evening  
        on that first day.

    Do you wonder what the disciples did?  
        Were they scared like the text says,  
            of being discovered?  
                Still scared of being pegged a  
    follower of this man who rebelled against Rome and  
    the Temple elite?  
        Did they argue back and forth,  
        wondering if Mary was telling the truth?

Of course she was, but who has ever seen  
    a dead person come back to life?  
    Well this text features Thomas a good bit so  
        talk about Thomas for a moment,  
            because the truth is,  
                these disciples have seen a dead person  
    come back to life.

At our Maundy Thursday service,  
    when the men from St. Luke's Methodist  
        presented the living last supper,

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<sup>1</sup> Jamie Clark-Soles, [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3222](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3222)

the Thomas character said,  
“I wish people would remember me  
for my affirmation more than my doubts.”  
That hit me—because we do focus on Thomas’s doubt  
more than his affirmation,  
precisely because of this mornings story.

Just a few chapters earlier,  
which also means only days before,  
as Jesus headed to Bethany  
to raise Lazarus from the dead,  
Thomas affirms that the trip to Bethany  
and on to Jerusalem is dangerous  
and perhaps quite deadly,  
*“Let us also go, that we may die with him,”* Thomas  
proclaims.

Today, let’s remember Thomas for his affirmations,  
more than his doubts.

What do the disciples do **all day** with Mary’s proclamation?  
And then the next question is what did they do  
**all week** after having seen the risen Lord?



A friend of mine in Alabama said,  
“It is possible that the disciples were like your kids  
—who were told to do the chores but didn’t.  
So when they hear the garage door open,  
they are scrambling and leaping off the couch

to look busy  
and get the chores done.”  
So in my mind I’m wondering if a week later,  
after a whole week of letting the resurrection sink in,  
I’m wondering if that’s  
what these disciples looked like  
when Jesus appears to them again;  
like kids who’ve just heard  
the garage door open  
and are scrambling to empty the dishwasher.

What do we look like  
after a week of hearing the news of the risen Lord?  
Do we look like we’ve been eating  
too many Reese peanut butter eggs?  
Are we scrambling to look busy too?

It seems that the function  
of the later part of the story,  
is to redeem Thomas  
—he was finally there with the disciples,  
so let’s tell a story about Jesus appearing again.  
And don’t we just treasure  
what Jesus says to Thomas,  
*“Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.”*

So even though we tend to pick up  
on the Thomas focus in this text,  
there is something else to pick up on.  
Jesus, a week later,  
is still appearing to the disciples.

That’s important,  
maybe more so than Thomas’s doubt turned belief.  
Technically Christ has not yet ascended  
and so keeps appearing to the disciples,  
still displaying the power of life over death.  
Let that sink in for a minute.  
Maybe that has a function in the story too.

We have a tendency to focus

on this snapshot of Easter  
—that it happened one morning  
and then we move on.  
Many of us go on Spring Break.  
Lots of us find a day or two to rest.  
But then it is back to normal.  
Maybe even we go back to doubt.  
But guess what?!?  
—Jesus did many other signs  
in the presence of his disciples,  
*which are not written in this book.*  
That's the phrase,  
that's the clue  
that this isn't about a snapshot.  
This isn't about  
condensing the gospel into seven days  
and calling it Holy Week.



You know what it says at the end of John?  
“But there are also many things that Jesus did;  
if everyone of them were written down,  
(John says,) I suppose  
that the whole world itself  
could not contain the books  
that would be written.”

*Wait a minute John,  
you mean that Jesus did things  
—signs that life is more powerful than death,  
and they aren't all here for us to read and memorize?  
There are signs of the resurrection  
that aren't written in this book?*

You know what the first sentence in Mark's gospel is?

“This is the beginning  
of the good news of Jesus Christ,  
Son of God.”

Easter isn't about a snapshot  
on one morning.

I love Holy Week, I do.

But our downfall has been  
that for centuries it has tricked our brains  
into celebrating for *only a week*  
and not living out the reality  
that resurrection means  
life over death, *now*.<sup>2</sup>

Easter isn't just about,

there's the empty tomb

—there's old doubting Thomas;

there's Jesus ascending in the clouds.

Nope, that is the Easter snapshot,

not the Easter event.

I think John's gospel

is telling us something about

the experience of Easter

and I think John is trying to give us just a hint;

a hint of Jesus doing signs,

a hint that what is written in this book

is only being the beginning of the good news.

You know why all the books in the world

couldn't contain all the things Jesus did?

Because Easter was always

just the beginning of the story.

What John wrote down,

it was only part of the story.

The things Jesus did while he was here,

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<sup>2</sup> Information and opinion on John comes for the Deconstructionists Podcast in an interview with Dr. Alexander Shaia <http://www.stitcher.com/podcast/the-deconstructionists-podcast/e/ep-41-dr-alexander-shaia-resurrection-is-49582989>

just a hint of the good news  
**that the resurrection**  
**means life is always more powerful**  
**than death, right here and right now.**

There is so much gospel going on around us  
that it can't all be written in this book!



Scholar and teacher, Dr. Alexander Shaia<sup>3</sup>,  
says that John's gospel  
doesn't follow the same pattern  
of the synoptic gospels,  
Matthew, Mark, and Luke—  
John doesn't follow their pattern for a reason.

You may remember for instances,  
that in the synoptic gospels  
Jesus turning over the tables in the temple  
happens after his triumphal entry,  
after what we celebrate as Palm Sunday.

When this happens,  
it signals the beginning of the end  
of his ministry.

But in John's gospel,  
Jesus overturning tables,  
happens in chapter 2,  
right after the wedding in Cana.  
In John when Jesus is crucified,  
there is no mention that it is Passover.

The longest single section of his gospel  
happens during the "last supper"

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<sup>3</sup> ibid

that Jesus has with the disciples  
—covering 4 chapters, where as it is only 7-16 verses  
in the other gospels.

John's gospel doesn't quite fit into our Holy Week pattern.

John isn't interested  
in the historicity of the resurrection,  
like the other gospels were.  
John's gospel is interested  
in the transformation that happens  
when you stop playing Easter as a snapshot  
and let Easter be the ongoing event in your life.

John can play around  
with what happens,  
when it happens  
because his telling of the good news  
doesn't depend on whether  
it happened on Friday  
at the beginning of Sabbath  
or whether we are crucifying Christ right now  
by bombing Syria.

John knows that Passover  
was a sacred meal to remember  
how God is a God  
who will free the prisoner  
and set free the slave,  
a God who hears the cry of the oppressed.

But it doesn't have to be Passover for John,  
because this new event of death and resurrection in Christ  
takes place wherever the oppressed are freed,  
whenever the marginalized are given life  
and whenever the poor  
are recognized as brothers and sisters.

That's what makes this Sunday perhaps,  
more important than last Sunday.



Because if we aren't willing  
to let the ongoing Easter event  
transform our lives;

if we aren't living out the Easter experience everyday;  
then last Sunday was nothing more  
than pomp and parade,  
it was nothing more than the farce  
of looking nice  
and sweet smelling flowers.

John wants us to realize that Easter,  
as the Resurrection in Christ  
isn't writing down  
every time life over takes death.  
He realizes that all the books in the world  
couldn't possibly contain  
the ways that resurrection can  
and will transform lives.

All the signs and wonders that point us to Christ?  
They aren't written in this book—  
because this book was just the beginning;  
just the spring board!  
You and I, we,  
are the living, breathing, sign  
of Jesus's transforming,  
ongoing Easter event.

Without you, without me  
—God's grand story misses a piece.  
We aren't naïve enough to claim  
that the story has to only be told through us  
—remember those rocks and stones  
that would cry out if we are silent?

We aren't the most important story tellers,  
but oh my, we can be such good ones.  
We can tell such amazing stories  
of transformation and resurrection,  
can't we?

Stories of relationships that were broken  
but then brought to their knees  
in the name of forgiveness.

Stories of babies born  
in the midst of death.

Stories of healing when all hope was lost.

**Those are our stories.**

**Those are the good news**

**of the ongoing Easter event;**

THE transforming event  
of resurrection matters  
if on every Sunday

**after the empty tomb**

if we are willing  
to live that transformation in our lives.

So maybe Thomas does have something to say to us.

Because a week after Jesus rose,  
a week after Easter,

he affirms that this Christ is,  
"My Lord and my God!"

And even today,  
a week after we celebrate Jesus  
rising from the grave,  
we can affirm,

My Lord and my God!,  
even if it doesn't get written down in a book.