

*Texts: Psalm 145:13-21; John 20:19-31*

*Subject: Jesus Appears to the Disciples*

*Theme: Show Up*

*Second Sunday of Easter, April 24, 2022; Living Hope Lutheran, Las Vegas, NV*

Grace and peace to you from God our Father in heaven, and our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

I loved seeing all the Easter facebook posts when I got home from church last week. Family photos and friends and pastors proclaiming Christ is Risen on all their pages - that's a good thing. Whether you love it or hate it, social media is a part of our lives now. It's where so many people get their news, connect with one another, keep up with their favorite musicians, television shows and movies, authors and fandoms, and maybe even their churches. We're streaming our worship online, and as I said to someone this week, "when it works, it's great." I love seeing what you all post on facebook or instagram. (I don't hang out on Twitter much.) But you've been posting fabulous meals, and family gatherings, and concerts and events. I love it. Sometimes it's a struggle, when we feel like our lives don't measure up, or we compare ourselves to others, and we feel like we're missing out on things. There's a scientific term for this. It's called *FOMO*: that is the Fear of Missing Out. The oxford definition of FOMO is "anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on social media." None of us like to miss out on events that are fun and exciting. It's the reason we worked so hard to make sure we were able to worship together online and safely in person as the coronavirus caused such a disruption in our lives these past two years. It doesn't feel good to know there was a party and we weren't invited. And most of us get disappointed when we're unable to attend the big game or concert, lecture or art event.

Thomas was suffering from some serious FOMO. He heard Jesus had shown up on the evening of the first day of the week - the same day Jesus had risen from the dead. The disciples were hiding out behind locked doors. They were afraid for their lives and were gathering in private, away from the religious leaders, in case their own lives might be at risk. Maybe they were praying, or making plans for what happens next. When in an instant - Jesus came into the room, even though the doors were locked. They heard he had been raised, but did they believe it? He proved it was him, and showed them the wounds in his hands and side, so they could be convinced it was the Lord. Where was Thomas? We can only guess, so let's imagine:

Thomas was courageous. He was the one who spoke up after Jesus said they would go to Bethany to see Lazarus who had died. The other disciples knew it was risky as the authorities would be looking for them, but Thomas was unafraid, saying, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (11.16). Maybe he didn't feel like he needed to hide out with Peter and James and the rest of them. Maybe in his distress, he had to stay busy. I'm like that too, at times when things get tense or difficult, I get to work. I find what needs to be done - washing dishes, cleaning the yard, running errands. Focusing on our actions rather than being paralyzed by emotions can be helpful at times.

Thomas was committed to following Jesus. When their teacher told the disciple he was going to prepare a place for them, He was the one who asked, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (14.5). He didn't doubt his beloved-ness, or his calling to follow Christ, even to death. Maybe Thomas was continuing the work of Jesus, healing, feeding, and sharing God's love. He trusted in

what Jesus told him, taught him and showed him. Maybe this faithful disciple didn't care to wait around in secret and make plans, but knew where he needed to be.

We just don't know. Thomas missed out on the first sighting. But he heard what happened later on. Jesus breathed on the disciples - not with *bread and hummus death breath*, but the sweet and risen breath of the Holy Spirit. "Peace to you," is his greeting. But in this case, it was more than a common 'hello.' BY his presence Jesus brings them peace. Jesus brings peace by showing up at just the right time - on the evening of the first day of the week - making that special day holy - marking it as the time for being in the presence of the Lord. We gather too, on this first day of the week, knowing that where two or three are gathered, Jesus is with us. We don't just gather in churches but in hospitals, and living rooms, in hotels and on practice fields. There's no place where the risen Jesus will not go.

At just the right time, the disciples received power from Jesus, just as he promised them. This was not power for their own sake, but for a purpose. As they gathered and prayed and made plans, Jesus gave them everything they needed. He blessed them. He commissioned them. He breathed on them - to give them the power to forgive sins, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Jesus showed up big time.

This year we've adopted "Show Up" as our theme here at Living Hope. We're gathering and praying and making plans and talking about the ways that we get to show up for one another, and of course none of that would be possible without Jesus being the one to show up for us. But we're like Thomas too - we don't just want a spiritual

experience - we want the real thing. All the other disciples got to see Him and touch him - that's all Thomas wants. We want to see him and touch him and know for sure. We can't blame him, right?

Maybe there was a time when you felt that spiritual high. We chase it sometimes - we want to be filled up - so we stay busy and do all the things. We run down to Mexico and build houses so we can see Jesus. We stay up late translating Greek and Hebrew so we can see how all the translators got it wrong and hear Jesus speak only to us. Oh was that just me? When I started "seriously" going to church about 15 years ago, I ran out and bought all these Christian T-shirts. They had crosses and scripture, and made me feel like I was really in the club. I wore them. They were cool. I wanted to look the part - like I was band of the band. I think more than that, I wanted people to know that I was a Christian with a 'capital 'C.' Slowly, I learned that I didn't need all that to know that Jesus was with me.

In our daily lives, Jesus shows up. We might not see him or touch him like those first disciples did - he ascended to heaven. He told us he would do that. But we do get to know Jesus. We do believe, and we learn to trust Jesus.

Jesus shows up when we're afraid and don't know what to do next. Jesus shows up when we lose someone we love. Jesus shows up into our time and space - into our reality to feed people, heal the sick, cast out our demons, turn over tables, welcome children, enrage powerful rulers, and to raise the dead. He even shows up to sit and eat with us - even when we are doubting, selfish, scared, wounded, worried, or weak. Nothing - NOTHING - can prevent Jesus showing up for us. Jesus was born and died and even that couldn't stop him. Christ is risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia! He shows

up at just the right time, risen to defeat death itself so we can know that we will never be without God's love and grace. And good to his word Jesus breathes into us the power of the Holy Spirit too, so that we are bound together by the same power that holds the Creator and the Savior as one. That is the sustaining love and power of the Holy Spirit. It ties us to him, it brings us with him. Julian of Norwich writes that "We are in God and God whom we do not see is in us." Even when we don't see, God is in us.

How do we know? Did you ever forgive someone? That's power that comes from Jesus. Did you ever forget yourself and just reach out to help someone in need? That's Jesus working in you. Did you ever get your heart broken, or fail at something, or disappoint someone and find healing, persevere through difficulties, or get a second chance to make things right? That's Jesus walking with you, bringing peace and breathing new life into you. No more fear of missing out. That's the real thing. That's Jesus showing up.

And we are blessed. Because of Thomas. Because of the rest of the disciples who didn't stay in that locked room, but went out and shared that faith, spoke that word of peace, went and healed and fed and walked with others who needed Jesus to show up for them too, and maybe they didn't get to see but they came to believe, and they passed it down, and down and down and down until it got here - until that Word showed up for us, so that we could believe and "have life in his name."

Jesus shows up for us. He steps into our locked rooms and locked hearts, and teaches us not to be afraid but to use the power we've been given, use the grace and mercy we've been gifted, and wake up into a new day to breathe life into others. That's

our calling and our commission. To go and share the news - Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!