

Let us pray... Open the eyes of our hearts Lord, we want to see you. Breathe your Spirit in our presence, and fill us with your peace... Amen.

I grew up in a loving Christian home... We went to church on Sundays, I was confirmed, I was active in youth group, helped with service projects, and I loved church...

In fact, before I went to college, it was my plan all along to go to Seminary after receiving my bachelor's degree...

And then... when I actually went off to college... everything changed...

It seems that there is something about late Saturday nights and early Sunday mornings that don't mix well...

In fact, I rarely stepped foot in a church, unless I was home visiting my parents and they convinced me to go...

And yet, here I stand in front of you today... It turns out my calling was there all along, it just took me a lot longer to get here than I originally expected...

And isn't that the thing about expectations? We never really know when they are going to line up with reality...

Especially when our reality is ever changing, evolving, and involving so many other moving parts... Sometimes it is hard to know what to expect in any given moment, especially when things are beyond your control.

And when things are out of your control it is only natural to try and find some control however you can...

And it is in this kind of messy situation that we find our gospel today...

Our Gospel starts on that very first Easter Day, only now it is evening...

We are in the Gospel of John, and the risen Christ has already appeared early that morning to Mary Magdalene...

And Mary, has informed all of the disciples of her sighting...

And yet, nobody knows what this actually means... Nobody knows what to expect with this risen Christ.

They are filled with questions... Wondering if Jesus has come back to do what they had expected all along and overthrow the government? Will a war pursue?

Or is Jesus angry with them because they didn't stop the crucifixion, but instead demand Barabas be released? How is Jesus going to handle all that has taken place?

And on the flip side, how are the Jewish authorities going to handle the risen Christ? Will they come for the disciples thinking they have something to do with this?

Naturally, all these questions fill the disciples with fear... Fear for their lives, fear for the future, and fear in not knowing what resurrection means...

And so, to gain some sort of control, they lock themselves in a room...

Little do they know, that the risen Christ just loves to get through locked doors.

And I often wonder if my heart was a locked door when I was going to college... My spirituality never wavered, but my understanding for organized religion did...

I questioned all sorts of things... I came up with my own answers... And I left many things unanswered... I wouldn't say I turned my back on God, but my priorities were definitely my own...

Little did I know then, that the risen Christ loves to get through locked doors...

And I remember that moment... When the risen Christ came through the locked doors of my heart... It was 2011, and my niece was being baptized, and I was her sponsor.

The words spoken at her baptism opened something inside of me...
Renewing my sense of call, inspiring me to make church a priority again.

And since then, there have been many more moments of renewal and transformation... Because we can't expect this kind of work to be a one and done thing...

Because Easter is not even a one and done thing...

Easter is a process... In fact, liturgically, every single Sunday is considered an Easter celebration... Even in the midst of Lent...

If you were to count the days in Lent, you would discover that Lent is actually 46 days, as the 40 days of Lent do not include Sundays, since Sundays are a mini-Easter celebration...

Because the good news of Easter is simply too much to pack into one day...

And it is nice to have the reminder of this very good news regularly... So, the Spirit can work... By continually renewing our hearts, minds, and spirits...

Which might be why, our Gospel has two resurrection appearances... Jesus understands our needs...

Just as Jesus understood the very specific need of Thomas...

Thomas says he needs to see the risen Christ, that he needs to touch Jesus' wounds... Thomas wants to have the same experience the others did.

And so, what does Jesus do? Jesus, waits, exactly one week to reveal himself to Thomas...

Meeting Thomas and the disciples on the following Sunday, making this the second Easter celebration...

Even in the midst of locked doors, and the locked heart of Thomas, Jesus shows up anyway...

Because the risen Christ loves to get through locked doors...

And the risen Christ desires to meet you where you are at, giving you what you need, like he gave Thomas what he needed.

Because God works in mysterious ways, ways that are not dependent upon what you do or don't do...

God will always find a way in...

Despite the walls we build and the locked doors of hearts, minds, or spirits. God knows how to cross those barriers...

And God desires to get through those barriers so that God can give you peace.

Because bringing peace was the first act of the risen Christ... The very first thing Jesus says to his disciples is, peace be with you...

Despite all of the fear that surrounded them, God's peace now fills that space.

And the second act of the risen Christ was to bring peace of mind to Thomas... By giving Thomas what he needed most, without judgement...

And this is great news for all of us... Since all have sinned... You don't need to fear what God's response will be when you meet God face to face...

You don't need to come up with any expectations...

Because the response, will always, be peace...

Peace that permeates locked doors... Peace that saturates hearts... Peace that sets you free...

The very same peace poured out by the Holy Spirit on that first Easter Day and in all the days that have followed... Amen.