On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In the name of the risen Savior: Peace be with you. Amen

On the first Easter morning the followers of Jesus were profoundly sad and confused. Why? The apparent answer is that their Master had been crucified. However, this is not the reason.

I will tell you what I mean later, but first let’s focus on the dramatic impact of the risen Savior when he came to these followers. What happens shows that Faith in the Risen Savior gives Certainty, Peace, and Eternal Life. The risen Savior gives us THREE GUARANTEES.

As stated, the followers of Jesus were confused. They question whether Jesus is the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, the Christ. The Emmaus disciples say: “We thought he was the one who was to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24) A spiritual war of unbelief against faith was raging within them. Even though Peter and the women had seen the risen Christ earlier in the day, John reports that “…the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders,…” Thomas was determined to be skeptical.

But the risen Savior restored their certainty both that he was alive and that he was the Christ.

After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

The same spiritual struggle of faith vs. unbelief rages in us, doesn’t it? It is hard for us too when we think of a loved one being alive again after we place them in the ground or have only their ashes. Like Thomas we want to trust in something we see and touch rather than in what God has told us. At present many stories of near death experiences and people who claim they went to heaven and came back. Several books and movies are telling their stories, as are TV interviews and testimonies given in religious settings.

But listen to this: Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. What does this mean? We are pointed to what is written, the
Scriptures, not told to look for miracles. The Scripture is the \textit{WORD OF GOD}. It is the only certain guide in matters of faith and life. It is through the Scripture that God produces faith and by this faith we are certain that Jesus is the Christ. Mysticism is the word used to describe when people look for proof apart from Word. They deal in a realm that cannot be tested by objective means. Spiritual forces are at work in that realm to lead people astray.

We cannot test or verify the claims and stories of people. They may be partially or wholly true, but we cannot know. What we can know is the Word of God. It takes away uncertainty about who Christ is and what he has done for us.

\textbf{SEEK CERTAINTY FROM THE SCRIPTURE ALONE, NOT FROM SOMEONE’S IMPRESSIVE EXPERIENCE.}

Keep in mind the warning of Jesus: \textit{“For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”} Matt:24:24

Certainty is the first guarantee of the risen Christ. The second is peace.

The risen Savior brought his followers peace from God. His message was \textit{Peace be with you}. We hear this against the background of what these so-called disciples deserved to hear. It is the perfect illustration of \textit{GRACE}. Grace means not getting what you deserve but what you do not deserve instead.

This peace is not for the disciples alone, but for the whole world. Christ’s terrible suffering and death was the price of forgiveness. His resurrection is proof of God’s peace and forgiveness.

This forgiveness is offered and given to us today in the Means of Grace—the Word and Sacraments. \textit{But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.}

The risen Savior brought peace and forgiveness to his guilty disciples as they felt the condemnation of their conscience.

This peace is for you and me too. We are not separated from God because of our sins, but reconciled through Jesus.

\textbf{First guarantee—Certainty; Second guarantee—Peace; Third guarantee—Eternal Life}

The risen Savior gives eternal life. His resurrection is the beginning of the New Creation that reverses the curse of death upon the first creation because of sin. His presence among his disciples showed his victory over death. This victory is for all who are in Christ: \textit{“by believing you may have life in his name.”}

The risen Christ offers three guarantees: Certainty, Peace, Life.

Now have you figured out the real reason why Jesus’ followers were confused and sad? The reason is twofold:

\begin{itemize}
  \item They did not believe what he had told them would happen. (Three times he had told them he would be crucified and rise on third day)
  \item They did not focus on the outcome to which he had pointed—his resurrection victory.
\end{itemize}

Our lives are in crisis too when we fail to believe, when we operate as if Jesus is not the Christ, the Son of God, and when we fail to see the present struggle with the promised victory in view.

A man named Bob loved his NFL team and never missed a game. But a family trip meant he would have to be flying during the game one Sunday. So he arranged to record it. At the airport he thought he overheard someone say his team won, but he couldn’t be sure.

As he watched the game it didn’t look good. Seven minutes into the first quarter his team was behind 14-0. At half time the score was 14-6. Worst of all his quarterback was running for his life and had been sacked 4 times in the first half. His running back was carried off the field.
In the third quarter both teams managed to score a touchdown so the final quarter began with a score of 21-13. Then the other team scored a field goal and the score was 24-13. It looked bad.

Then with only 4 minutes to go his team recovered a fumble and scored a quick touchdown. But they would have to get the ball back quickly and score again. With 30 seconds to go his team intercepted and ran it back for a touchdown. As the final seconds ticked off the clock Bob’s team won 27-24.

Do you see how this game illustrates our Christian struggle to believe? We have been told how things will turn out.

Christ’s resurrection assures us that he is the Christ, the Son of God. His death for our sin purchased God’s peace and forgiveness. His resurrection restores life to us.

We are assured we will be reunited with our loved ones and with our Savior in heaven. We are assured that our lives are under the care of our Heavenly Father and his angels. But it is often hard to believe when we or our loved ones are like the quarterback flattened on the ground or like the running back carried off the field. It is hard to believe when it looks like what we heard about the outcome of life is doubtful. Don’t be overwhelmed by anything that happens during the game of life.

Focus on the promised outcome. We didn’t just think we heard this in an airport. Christ came back from the dead to share his victory with us when the game of history has played out to the last second. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Amen