

Acts 2:14a, 22-32
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

All through the gospels, it's clear: When people saw Jesus for who he was, their lives changed. Some times that was at least partly because he healed them or forgave them. But often the real change was in perspective. Think about the stories we have heard, even in the season of Lent. The healed blind man. Martha and Mary, Jesus' disciples, who could name him as the Son of God. The Samaritan woman, who knew that Jesus was the Messiah. When they met Jesus, they saw him truly. Their lives were different.



This was the case for the 12 disciples after Jesus' resurrection, too. Meeting the risen Christ changed them. They had been behind locked doors, afraid after all that had happened. They may have feared for their lives, not knowing if they would be next. Yet Jesus broke (or walked) through their walls. Jesus helped them to see for themselves what had happened – even Thomas, who wasn't there the first time.

Jesus met them in their weaknesses and needs. The disciples had gathered and locked the doors. They may have been regretting their choices, or wondering what they could have done differently. Where had

they all gone, when Jesus was taken, and beaten, and crucified? None of them had been around, his students and closest friends.

Yet Jesus forgave them of their sins, the memory of which may have been eating their hearts alive. He shared with them his powerful peace that quelled their paralyzing fears and forgave their deepest regrets.

Before, Jesus had promised the Spirit, saying that he would not leave them orphaned or alone. And he delivered on his promise. “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (*Jn. 20:22*) He breathed that Spirit of life to be among and in them, just as God had done at creation.

Meeting the resurrected Jesus transformed how the disciples would have understood all that had happened. He moved them from mourning and fear to wonder and joy. The experience probably changed how they understood who Jesus was, too. He was not just a martyr, forsaken by his friends, and killed by the broken system of power. He was not just an amazing teacher and healer. He was not just a military messiah, come to save them from the power of Rome. Through his death and resurrection, they saw God’s ultimate victory and power over death.

In the moment of our gospel story, the disciples may not have known how to describe who Jesus was. But their shared sense of wonder and mystery at his resurrection was the seed for the early church to figure out who he was. Jesus, the Son of God, was truly God.

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The letter named *1 Peter* talks about how we are changed through a similar thing. We don't see the resurrected Jesus, as the twelve saw him. But we do meet the resurrected Jesus through the waters of baptism. "By [God's] great mercy" we were given "a new birth," when our lives were joined with his. (*1 Pet 1:3*) After encountering Jesus and his resurrection, our new birth is into life, real life that lives and breathes hope for our lives and for the future.

This hope comes, despite the fact that we are subject to many things in our lives. Our faith is tested. We face illness, trial and tribulation, discrimination, oppression, injustice, hunger, threat, persecution, suffering. No matter what we go through, none of those forces or agents have power over the "living hope" that we have been given. (*1 Pet 1:3*) It is "inheritance" can't be touched by any power or any evil. It is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading." (*1 Pet 1:4*) Guarded by God for us, just for us!

As baptized people, God's living hope changes us. We look at our world, we experience our lives, with a sense of the bigger picture. Jesus lived and still does! There is living hope, and it's not just that our lives will go on. That's only one part. Through Christ, God is bringing about new and powerful creation in our world. There is a vision, a hope, a real future, for our world. One day the Spirit will finally bring about God's reign of justice and peace among us.

We, along with Liam and Asher today, live oriented toward this future, soaked in God's love. We live with this vision of community and communion, that God continues to nurture gradually, around and among us.

And what about when tornados and disease, sin and death, which seem to threaten God's blessings that we enjoy?

Our baptized lives continue in faith, trusting in God's work, beholding God's blessings. Through it all, we glorify and praise and honor God's work in the creation, salvation, and redemption of the world. All of us – our bodies and minds, hearts and souls – point toward the power of resurrection, for us and for our world.

Today we join with Thomas, Liam, and Asher as we witness and confess: "My Lord and my God!" (*John 20:28*) Gracious God, give us all the faith to know you, and to trust the promise and joy of resurrection for us and our world. In Jesus' blessed name we pray, Amen.