Traditionally during the weeks after Easter, many churches notice a significant drop in worship attendance after the spiritual high or the “mountaintop” experience of Easter. Despite what the calendar tells us, the season of Easter has just begun. Over the next 42 days, technically we are still in the Eastertide season, until the day of Pentecost. So don’t be surprised if we are still singing hymns that are related to Easter and the resurrection of Christ. After all, **Easter isn’t just an annual event that we do and move on….but instead it reminds us of who we are and what our faith is calling us, as we take on the attitude of proclaiming the risen Christ and that He is alive in us.**

Our text this week takes us to a familiar post-Easter scene where we find many of the disciples were hiding in fear. This was immediately after the body of Jesus had been reported missing. Nobody knew for sure of what was going on, whether Jesus’ body was stolen or perhaps if indeed he was resurrected, like he had foretold. Many of those disciples were still living in fear, afraid to come out in public.

Then one day, unexpectedly Jesus appeared amongst the disciples into the room where they were all gathered, except Thomas. Some thought that they were seeing a ghost. **They wanted to Touch and See for themselves, in order to Believe!** Who would blame them? Chances are you and I might would probably do the same thing as well. Jesus invited the disciples to put their hands on his side, to see the scars on his body and to feel the nail prints on his hands and his feet.

This was a **pivotal moment** in the story of our Christian faith, even though many of the disciples at the time needed something tangible in order to believe. But **God granted us the courage and the faith to believe even when we do not see and hope when we do not touch.** None of us were there at the foot of the cross or at the empty tomb on that Easter morning. But yet, we still believe! Why? We believe because of the eyewitness account of those who were there, the women, the children, the disciples and the other bystanders, not through some scientific proofs or forensic evidences, but by the word of mouth and by our faith!

Having faith doesn’t mean that we’ve got all the answers to every questions out there or got life all figured out. We wish we do, but we don’t! **When we have faith, we simply proclaim that we have an anchor of what we believe in. We invite the Holy Spirit to unlock our fears and to open the door of our hearts for Christ to enter and to work among us.**

When it comes to faith, one of the more intriguing and fascinating parts of our passage today is that it involves all five of our human senses....**Seeing, Touching, Smelling, Hearing, and Tasting.**

Not only did Jesus offered the disciples to Touch and See His scars and nail prints, he breathed onto them in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit. In the Luke’s account of this story, Jesus offered them the proof of Smelling and Tasting of the food that He had asked for. As you would imagine, Jesus was hungry, after not having eaten for days. Jesus asked for a piece of broiled fish and He ate it right before their eyes. Jesus not only satisfied His own physical hunger, but more importantly He satisfied the disciples’ curiosity and doubt that what they were seeing was not a ghost. This resurrected Jesus was real and has indeed bodily resurrected from the dead.

As we read in our Acts passage earlier, the disciples eventually mustered up enough courage and boldness to stand as **witnesses to all the things that had happened.[[1]](#footnote-1) Instead of hiding out and stood behind closed doors, they became eyewitnesses and sharers of their testimonies. Talk about a dramatic turnaround in the faith of the disciples.**

To bring it a little closer to home, every time we come together as a church, to worship and to fellowship, we too can experience the fullness of God’s presence through our senses. We experience God through our **TOUCH** - when we shake someone’s hand, passing out the peace of Christ or give someone a hug. We experience God through our **SIGHT** – when we see evidence of what God is actively doing all around us and we lift up our prayers of joys, thanksgiving or concerns in response. We experience God through our **SMELL** and **TASTE** -whenever we share meals together, including the Thanksgiving feast of Communion, as we will do later on. We experience God through the **HEARING** of God’s voices through the hymns of praise and the Word that is spoken and unspoken, not only from the preacher but also by the stories that we have to share, sometimes those stories are just as powerful and experiential.

Furthermore, through the Holy Spirit, God gives us the minds and the hearts to comprehend and interpret the meaning of God’s word and to apply it in our daily lives. We may never be fully comprehend God, but we can always seek to draw a bit closer to God through our obedience and our faith.

There is a Thomas in all of us. Sometimes I feel sympathetic towards Thomas for wanting to investigate and search for the truth before he believes. **It’s our natural human-instinct that we as questions. It is only through our questioning and exploring that we discover the truth!** Thomas was just the analytical and rational type who simply wanted to be 100% sure before he accepted what other people say. **An investigated faith is better than blind faith, or no faith at all.** We need people like Thomas among us as well. Thomas was willing to take risks and to take faith to another level.

Ironically the name “Thomas” in Aramaic/Syriac means “Twin”. Perhaps we all have our “Thomas” embedded within us as our “twin” who would refuse to believe or is skeptical when it comes to our faith and commitment in Christ. We become our own personal critics and skeptics when we refuse to trust in God and to honor our calling as God’s witnesses.

I remember a few years ago, I was serving as a chaplain at Lutheran Hospital in Sunset Park. I remember one morning, the phone rang in the Pastoral Care office requesting for a chaplain to accompany a young woman who was there to see her deceased grandfather, who had died for about 2 hours.

I had no idea what to expect, as the nurse let both of us go into the grandfather’s room and stand by him along the bedside. The moment we uncovered the body, we began to smell the stench coming off the lifeless body. The granddaughter embraced her grandfather’s body, as I stood closely by her side to offer my support and comfort to her. She clung on to her grandfather’s body refusing to let go.

That went on for about 15 minutes I would say. Finally this young woman decided to let go and began to walk away. I offered to pray with her at the moment and she accepted the prayer.

Later on as we continued our conversation outside the room, she thanked me and told me that it was important that she came personally to **Touch**, **See** (and even **Smell**) her beloved grandfather in person one last time, in order for her to **Believe**. **How often are we like that granddaughter or Thomas, who needed tangible proofs in order to believe?** Just by someone telling us by the word of mouth may not good enough.

During these 50 days after His resurrection, Jesus didn’t just appear to his disciples behind a locked door in a undisclosed location. He was out and about, physically walking, talking, and eating with many of the disciples. Yet somehow, even to this day, many of us still fail to recognize or refuse to acknowledge His presence in our lives. What more do we still need in order to believe? **Jesus may had been knocking at the door of our hearts, but many of us have refused to let him in or answer the door. We’ve turned on the “mute” button and refused to hear what the Spirit is trying to tell us.**

We demanded tangible sign of Christ’s presence and Christ offered us the bread and the wine for us to partake and remember the words that He instructed us with. ***“As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, do this in remembrance of me.”*** When He appeared with two other disciples on the road to Emmaus, it wasn’t until He had broken bread with them, then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.

No longer shall we keep ourselves behind those closed doors, like those disciples, but **we must cast aside all of our fears and proclaim that Christ has risen indeed through our words, our actions, and in our lives.**

Undoubtedly, just like those disciples, there are still much fears, anxieties and uncertainties that we need to overcome in our lives. But out of the cruelty of death in a hopeless situation, come new life and a new beginning. **Together, we are commissioned to be witnesses of what God is actively doing and what God is about to do.**

By the power of the Holy Spirit, **Christ has empowered us to be God’s witnesses.** As one theologian summed it all up nicely saying, As Easter people, *“****We are to be witnesses to Christ’s presence among us, in our words and in our deeds; our faith demands nothing less.”****[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Come to think of it, we all have our share of doubts and denials of in us. We all have been critical and skeptical of God’s work in our lives and in those around us. **We still find ourselves living in a Good Friday world when the risen Christ has already commissioned us to live as Easter people.** We’ve second-guessed our own decisions, our actions, and even our own faith. We’ve under-estimated the power of the Holy Spirit already at work among us. We’ve ignored what is happening around us buried our heads in the sand by refusing to believe at God’s happening.

Doing God’s work is a risky business! We must be willing to take bold risks in order to overcome our fears, including the risk of failures and falling short of God’s expectations. But there is to be no failures in God’s eyes, if we simply do the best as God enables us to do. By taking risks, we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into new possibilities and new adventures.

Friends, Christ has offered us the key to unlock our fear and our faith, so we may stand and proclaim in confidence of the Lord’s resurrection. ***“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet come to believe!”[[3]](#footnote-3)* Everyday is Easter whenever and wherever the living Christ is proclaimed!** When Christ stands knocking at the door, don’t let Him stand there. Open up the door of our hearts and let Christ come in. Christ has died, Christ has risen and Christ will come again. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. *Acts 5:32* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Essex, Barbara J. Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 2, P. 429* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *John 20:29* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)