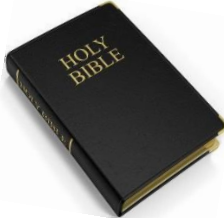


Linway Church In Touch

Staying In Touch Without Touch

April 15, 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR



Dear Friends,

Greetings! It has been over a month now since we gathered at our Lord's Linway Sanctuary for worship and to enjoy the fellowship of one another's company due to the Corona Virus Pandemic. It is still too soon to know when we can actually expect to come to worship in the Sanctuary. As I write, the *shelter in place and physical and social separation or distancing* declaration is to continue for several more weeks at the very least. I know that you are anxious to resume what we thought were our "normal" activities. So am I. I hope you were able to participate in our virtual presentations during Holy Week through the Church's Facebook page or Website. Trust me, I know, it's not quite the same as the real thing, but it is the best we can do under the circumstance. The reality of the witness of Mary Magdalene and the disciples does not change.

This coming Lord's Day, April 19th, has sometimes been called *low Sunday*. The reason for this is pretty straight forward. Easter Sunday is the greatest celebration of the Christian Faith. It tends to draw the greatest number of people to worship. Unfortunately, there also tends to be a great drop-off in attendance the next Lord's Day. The Good News **is** that **Christ is Risen!** Not just one day once a year, but for all time. The worship services following Easter that lead up to the celebration of Pentecost, the giving of the Holy Spirit, all invite us to believe in the reality of the Resurrection. While I love welcoming as many as will come to worship at our Lord's Linway Sanctuary, please remember that it is out of an abundance of caution that requires us to **not** gather for holy worship until the pandemic has subsided. I am asking once again that you take time, find time, and make time, for your own private or family devotional worship. It is the best we can do under the circumstance.

In an effort to assist you, let me first share with you the Scripture readings designated for this coming Sunday, April 19th, the Second Sunday of Easter:

- Psalm 16
- Epistle: 1 Peter 1: 3-9
- Gospel: John 20:19-31

As before, I encourage you to read one or all of the Scripture texts. The message for this Sunday is based on the Gospel lesson of John 20:1-18. It picks up right where we left off with the Gospel Reading on Easter Sunday. It is the account of the resurrected Jesus appearing to the disciples in the Upper Room. The first occasion finds Thomas absent. The second occasion finds Thomas present with the other disciples.

After the death of Jesus on the cross, the disciples return to the Upper Room, the only place they knew in the immediate confusion of what had transpired. Some might say that they were keeping a low profile, but truthfully, they were hiding behind locked doors in fear that they too would be arrested and suffer the same fate as Jesus: the cross. Mary Magdalene had come early in the morning to first report that the stone, which had sealed the tomb where Jesus' body had been placed, had been rolled away. In addition to that, she said *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him"* (John 20:2).

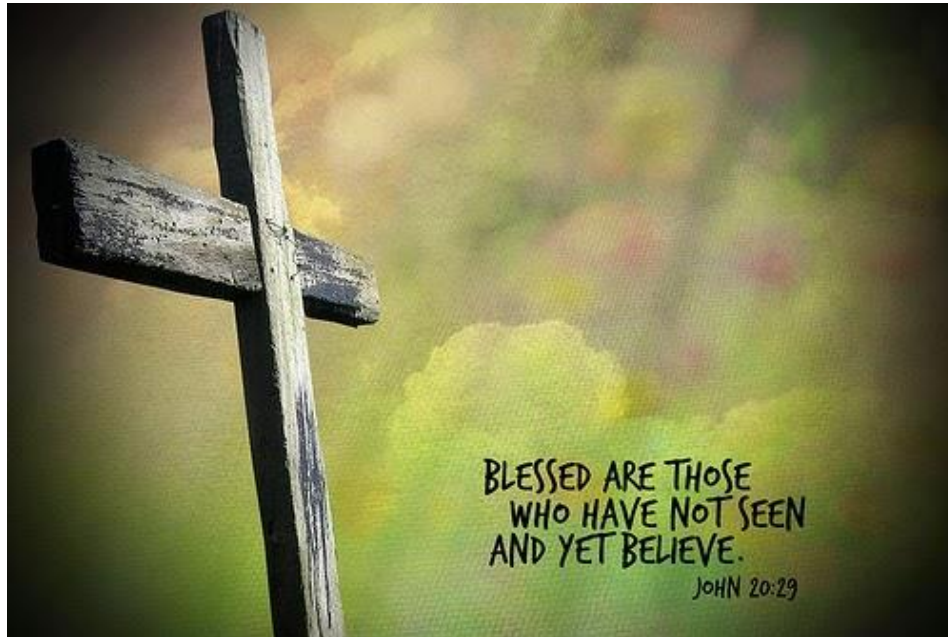
If that wasn't enough, after Peter and the disciple Jesus loved confirmed that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty, Mary Magdalene had an encounter with the Risen Christ. She was instructed by him to *"go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"* (John 20:17). It was then that she once again went to where the disciples were gathered and said *"I have seen the Lord; and she told them that he had said these things to her"* (John 20:18).

They could have easily dismissed her words as a hallucination or hysteria following the traumatic events of the past week. Women were not considered reliable witnesses in the first century. Fortunately, we know better. As if to verify Mary Magdalene's announcement, Jesus appears to the disciples behind the closed and locked doors of the Upper Room. As it turns out, Thomas was not present at that time. As far as those present were concerned, Mary Magdalene's testimony had been vindicated and validated.



When Thomas returned, he was greeted by the news of those who had been present when Jesus had appeared to them. To say he was skeptical would be an understatement. This is why some have labeled him **doubting Thomas**. Thomas wanted proof: *"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails, and my hand in his side, I will not believe"* (John 20:25). Thomas wants to see the truth for himself. Which of us would not want the same?

Sometime later Jesus did present himself to Thomas and again to the disciples in the Upper Room. Jesus invited Thomas to do what he said he wanted to do: to place his finger in the mark of the nails and his hand in his side. Thomas doesn't need to do this. He falls on his knees and exclaims "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Jesus then uttered the statement which has echoed down through the centuries in as many languages as the account has been translated: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). That is the message for us as well.



Once again, I am asking you to intentionally read one or more of the above Scripture texts, to think of its meaning in and for your life. I also ask you to pray for the sick, the poor, and those in need. Expand your prayer to include those providing medical assistance to all whose health is impaired and not just those afflicted by this pandemic. Pray for our elected leaders at all levels of government that their decisions will aid our community, state, and country in providing assistance to those in need, not only medically but economically.

I will be writing to you again next week. In the meantime, keep the faith and stay safe.

God Bless You,

Eric E. Dennis, Pastor

Online Video Message: on the Linway Website at www.LinwayChurch.org
or on the Linway Church Facebook page.

Linway United Presbyterian Church
600 Lincoln Highway North Versailles, PA 15137
Rev. Eric E. Dennis, Pastor 412-824-3555 pastor@linwaychurch.org
Church Office 412-824-3555 contact@linwaychurch.org