

Second Sunday of Easter

April 12, 2026



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Now, this one fact, that one so exalted as Christ himself, the only and eternal Son of God, has trod the path of suffering before us, enduring unlimited distress, agony transcending the power of humanity to experience—this alone should be enough to admonish and urge anyone to patiently endure affliction.

— Martin Luther —
Sermon on 1 Peter

Acts 5:29–42

After being flogged by the religious leaders, the disciples were given one restriction: they were not to speak in the name of Jesus. All that was required for them to get along peaceably among their own people was to be quiet about what they believed. Instead, they were ceaseless in their teaching about Jesus. Their witness could not be contained.

- *Why didn't the disciples just keep quiet and stay out of trouble? What are some ways we are tempted to remain silent about what we believe?*

Gamaliel, a respected teacher among the Pharisees, was pretty certain that he had the situation figured out. He had seen would-be messiahs come and go before. There was never a shortage of charismatic figures leading people down a rosy path, only to disappear as quickly as they arose. Gamaliel figured Jesus was just another one in a long line, and if his disciples were left alone, they would quickly lose interest in following one who was crucified as a criminal.

But Gamaliel also offered another insight. It occurred to him that if Jesus really was who he claimed to be, there was no way this movement could be stopped. In fact, those trying to stop it would find themselves fighting against God. Gamaliel concluded that the safest course of action was to simply let things unfold.

- *Do you think the success of Christianity is proof of the truth of the Gospel? If something is successful, does that automatically mean God is blessing it?*
- *Is suffering or failure an indication that God is withholding his blessing? How does the theology of the cross shape our understanding of success and failure?*

Psalms 148

The entire creation praises the Lord! From the highest heaven to the deepest sea, praises come forth for the awesome Creator.

- *Can you imagine such praise as rocks and hills, stars and sea creatures worshipping the Lord of all? What would that look and sound like?*

1 Peter 1:3–9

An imperishable inheritance is hard to imagine. Everything that we work so hard for, save, invest and tend in order to have something to pass on to our heirs eventually passes away. Farms are sold off in pieces. Heirlooms get lost or broken. Even if the inheritance is not squandered or lost,

eventually the heir will pass away.

What we have been given in Christ, however, is an imperishable inheritance. It has staying power. In this way, it is wholly unlike any other inheritance. Nothing in this world lasts. But the salvation that we have in Jesus Christ lasts forever. God himself is watching over and protecting the heirs he has chosen, until at last we claim our inheritance — the salvation of our souls.

- *What is the difference between an inheritance and a wage? Why is it significant that salvation is described as our inheritance? Do you think it is possible to squander or waste or lose the inheritance you've been given through Christ?*

John 20:19–31

It's difficult to imagine the kind of darkness that surrounded and filled the disciples in the days after Jesus' crucifixion. They had pinned their hopes and dreams on this one individual, and now it all was lost. This was more profound than losing a friend or loved one. These disciples had altered their lives to conform to what they thought Jesus was going to do. They had left behind their old way of being to prepare for the new way Jesus was supposed to usher in. And then he was executed without even putting up a fight. The disciples were lost in the darkness of grief and despair.

Then into the midst of that darkness, Christ, the very one they were grieving, appeared among them, shining the light of new life — a new reality. Jesus, whose death they had witnessed firsthand, was now among them, alive and well. Simply by appearing in their midst, Jesus changed the disciples' concept of what was possible and what was true. They could suddenly see that God was acting in the world in a way they had never before imagined. God was bringing life out of death.

- *When have you been the closest to despair? What kind of word or action broke through your despair? How is Jesus still breaking through our doubts and fears and sorrows?*

Thomas wasn't there to witness this life-changing, death-defying light. The darkness that surrounded him was a shield against the joyous proclamations of his friends. He couldn't conceive of the kind of world they were describing. He couldn't imagine that things could be so different from what he had always known. He couldn't just will himself out of the darkness of his despair and grief.

- *Do you think Thomas's doubt was unreasonable? How could he be expected to believe something as unheard-of as the Resurrection without seeing it first hand?*