

Title: Easter's Echo
Text: John 20:19-31
Liturgical Date: Easter 2
Calendar Date: April 20/23, 2006

Grace mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. As we continue to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, our meditation comes to us from the Gospel lesson, John chapter 20, where we hear again these words, "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, 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 his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." Now Thomas (called 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 it." This is the text, fellow disciples of the risen Lord.

One of my fondest memories as a child was camping down near the Wisconsin Dells. There was this large rock formation that we could climb and when at the top, you overlooked this valley. When you called out, your voice would echo through the valley. Now, we have all heard echoes before, and we know that echoes are fainter and less clear than what was originally spoken. We know the echoes fade away into silence. But Easter's echo grows stronger and louder, and spreads further with each refrain.

Easter is echoing. The celebration of our Lord's resurrection is being echoed this week. It's echoed every week. Each Sunday is an echo of the celebration of Easter. In our Gospel lesson and text, we hear the first echo of Easter.

Easter echoes among the disciples. Jesus comes to them even though they have forgotten His promises and denied and deserted Him. Easter echoes in the physical presence of our risen Lord. Though the doors were closed and locked, Jesus enters the upper room.

He speaks to them a word of peace and forgiveness. Easter echoes in the gracious words of Jesus who died for the forgiveness of sins and to make peace between God and humanity.

Jesus breathes on the disciples and gives them the Holy Spirit so that they can forgive themselves and others. Easter echoes in the power of God, which raised Jesus from the dead and enables man to forgive sins, by the authority of our risen Lord.

Easter echoes again among the disciples, especially in Thomas. A week later, we hear Easter's echo again. Jesus comes to the disciples, but primarily to Thomas, doubting Thomas, weak in faith. Jesus comes to him even though he would not believe what he could not understand. Easter echoes in Jesus' presence for such a weak believers. Thomas was also the one who said, "Let us go that we may die with Him." He had faith, but the cross was such a shock that his faith was shaken. Severe tests can do that to even the most faithful.

Jesus calls Thomas not to rely on the foolishness of human wisdom and to deny his own strength and reason. He calls Thomas to believe on the basis of what is real rather than on what he perceives. Easter echoes in the foolishness of God being wiser

than the wisdom of man. Jesus calls Thomas to believe and then empowers him to believe. Easter echoes in death yielding to life.

Easter is echoing among us as well. The echoes of Easter have grown louder and stronger throughout the ages. Their refrain resounds among us. Easter echoes in God's Word. In the weakness of our human reason, when we were lost and confused, filled with doubt and unbelief, Jesus came to us in His Word. The Word made flesh still dwells among us in the written and spoken Word. He is with us always according to His promise.

Jesus' Word is living, active, and powerful. He enables us. His Word still accomplishes what He purposes for it. His Word works faith. His Word brings forgiveness. Easter is echoing in our lives through God's life-changing, life-giving Word.

Easter echoes in Baptism, where Jesus comes to us in water and the Word. While we were locked in sin and death, unable to come to Him and unable to let Him in; He came to us.

In the Word joined to water, Jesus spoke to us, calling us from doubt and unbelief to faith. He spoke us into life and then spoke our names before the Father, to name us as His own. Jesus has re-created us. Easter is echoed in Baptism as we are joined with Christ in His death and raised to new life with Him in His resurrection.

Easter echoes in the Lord's Supper. In the most intimate way imaginable, yet still beyond our wildest imaginations, Jesus comes to us in, with, and under the bread and wine. He passes through the locked doors of our minds to be with us. When we celebrate His Supper, Jesus enables us, forgives us, strengthens and feeds us. Easter is echoed in the real presence of Christ in His Holy Supper.

Then it becomes our turn to echo Easter. Easter is echoes when we share the love of Christ with others, especially to those who don't know Him. We echo Easter when we share Christ's word of peace, which displaces fear. We echo Easter when we share the Word of faith with others. Easter echoes each time God works faith through His powerful Word.

Easter is echoed in our joy; the great joy we have because of our Lord's resurrection. We have this joy because we know that Jesus has reconciled us with the Father. We have great joy because we have received the forgiveness of sins in Christ. We have great joy because we know that since Christ was raised from the dead by the Father, we too will rise to spend eternity in heaven with Him. Easter echoes in the daily joy that we have as Christ's children.

Easter's echo keeps going. Peace replaces fear. Easter echoed among the disciples and their fear gave way to the peace that Jesus brought them. Easter echoes among us in a world filled with fear. Yet we can and do have peace-real and lasting peace that Jesus alone can bring us. Easter will echo in eternity where all fear will be put away and we will know peace in all it's fullness.

Easter's echo keeps going, as faith replaces doubt. It echoes among us. All the things that hinder faith are destroyed by God. Easter will echo in the celebration before the throne of God when we enter into His eternal kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ.

Joy. Above all, Easter echoes joy. The Lord fills us with joy. Easter will echo, and we will celebrate eternal joy when we enter our heavenly home. Peace, faith and joy. This is Easter's echo. Thanks be to God that through the Son Jesus Christ, we have heard Easter's echo and that He echoes Easter in us. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in true faith unto life everlasting, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.