Sermon Apr. 6 & 7 2024 FLC 2nd Easter

Texts: Acts 4:32-35, 1Jn 1:1-2:2, John 20:19-31

Title: “One Heart and One Soul”

 Salutation

**Bridge**

 **I’m glad to see you here again, exactly one year from the last time you heard my message on the texts for today. We can all agree that the story of doubting Thomas is well known by us. We are in one accord on that. Because every year, the week after Easter, Pastor Curt is on vacation, and I deliver a new way of looking at the texts without sounding repetitive. Trust me, I prayed about this. I waited for the Spirit to lead. And He did.**

 **How? When I looked at the common theme in the texts for today, I found it to be this: that word “common”. In fact, the reading from acts said of those who believed that they were of one heart and one soul”. Things held in common about--- belief. Specifically, the nature of man, the nature of God, sin, repentance, and forgiveness. That being said, today may seem like a total letdown after the joy of Easter last week and we are in Eastertide. We are to celebrate more than just one day, one week, or as long as the Easter joy fades from our memory. However, with the world the way it is, it seems like we are just back on the same track with life before it all happened. But only for those not holding all these things in common faith. Let me explain.**

**Law**

 **All of these topics are ones that we as Lutherans walk together with. That is, we believe the same things about them. At least we are supposed to. We are like the disciples that were in the room the first time Jesus appeared and then gave our testimony to Thomas about what we saw. In fact, the exhortations seen in all three texts express just that; that they had seen, touched, and believed that Jesus was raised from the dead, because they saw it with their own eyes. In those exhortations, they express how man is, not believing until we see it for ourselves. We are ALL like Thomas, aren’t we? We doubt until we see impossible things with our own eyes. And when we find that we have made mistakes and understand that we may sin in those errors, we cringe. We are so skeptical of everything because of all the misinformation out there. And we don’t know what might even happen tomorrow! So, naturally, we ARE just like Thomas. Is it a sin to not believe this or that in our culture, in the news, or the internet? No. Certainly not. But I have to say, in this day and age, it is difficult to know what is true and what isn’t. Because of this, we miss many opportunities for service and missions, and that IS a sin.**

 **Now, that could be a potential problem, for when doubt exists, then difficult decisions are not made and suddenly, and it could be a life and death situation that may not be able to be turned back from. It’s too late. That’s the way it is in the world. We don’t know what will happen next out there. It’s like an evil plan zeroing in on us to destroy us. And it will always be like that in this life.**

**However, bad decisions made after people who walk together share that which pertains to salvation will be a BIG problem. I’m going to tell you that if eleven brothers tell you not to do something you know is wrong, you had better listen. And if those same brothers come and tell you Jesus is in the room, you may want to check it out to see if they are crazy or you are! If matters we are in one heart and soul come about and you don’t believe, a personal crossroads is in front of you. As it was for Thomas.**

 **But remember, last week’s passion, we shared the night before Christs’ crucifixion where He shared the first holy meal on Maundy Thursday. Good Friday saw us standing at the foot of the cross as His blood fell to the ground and our salvation was won. And then, we waited until He came back from proclaiming to the souls in hell that death had been swallowed up and we were now alive. And finally, upon the resurrection, we ponder how that could be. How could all that sin be wiped out by a righteous God? You know that when you placed that short list of sins on the cross on Maundy Thursday, it seemed like nothing. But you dread the real list. And you would really like to hide like Adam and Eve did when the Lord came to see them for a walk in Eden. Because we sin. In fact, we sin very well. It is another thing we hold common and walk together in. Therefore, repent. For we do not know the day or hour He will come to walk with us again.**

**Gospel**

 **However, we have seen the events of last week by *faith*, unlike those that have seen and proclaimed what they did see in person in the texts today. So, did we believe them? Did we believe as Christ told Thomas that day of unbelief? Are we blessed? YES! Jesus said what God wants for us--- that all people should believe. Even to a man like us, Thomas, who had just doubted. And Jesus forgave instantly. In Thomas’ sudden belief and profound statement about His Lord, Jesus showed the merciful nature of God. Together, brothers and sisters, holding these things dear to us, being of one heart and one soul, we bow down and proclaim, “My Lord and my God!”**

 **For in His death, we have received salvation and in His resurrection the assurance that we too, shall rise again. For we, being baptized into Him are His. We sinners, knowing our nature, repent, and God, who desires reconciliation, forgives all who believe. All of us that have not seen nor touched the wounds of Christ as those who have walked before us, but with us, have eternal life through faith in the One who died for us. And we, like He, shall rise again!**

**Conclusion**

 **John proclaims these things in his epistle. He exhorts everyone to believe them, those that have seen and heard and witnessed what God did those days for us; today. That we, too, may have the joy they shared. He points out to us what we hold in common with them; the light of the world in the midst of darkness, the forgiveness of sins in the confession thereof, and a loving God that advocates for us. For we are just like Thomas, skeptics, until we are forgiven by the Jesus we see in all these testimonies. All by His grace through faith. And we fear no longer, and we rejoice in these things in our *present* circumstances, no matter what may happen, as we walk together in one heart and one soul waiting for His glorious, promised return.**

 **Come Lord Jesus, quickly, for many of us are waiting and none of us shall be disappointed. Amen.**