

## Sermon 12 April 2026 – Encountering Jesus

By Revd. Karen Adendorff

It is evening on *that* first day of the week - the most confusing, unbelievable day in history. Earlier, that morning, the disciples had seen the empty tomb and heard from Mary Magdalene that she had seen Jesus alive. That she had spoken to him.

And yet now, here they are in a house and the doors are locked.

We often assume they were only hiding from the authorities. But one commentator invites us to take a closer look and consider whether they were also hiding from themselves. After all, “locked doors” don’t just keep “them” out. They also keep our own shame, failure and guilt in.

Imagine the tension in the room. Filled with emotionally charged silence. Each one lost in their own thoughts. Trying to make sense of what they had seen and heard.

Peter is there—the man who swore he’d die for Jesus and then swore he never knew him. The others are there too—the ones who ran away when Jesus was arrested. Every one of them knows, deep down, that when it mattered most, they failed. So maybe they are not only hiding from others. Maybe they are hiding from themselves. And maybe...they are even hiding from Jesus.

Their guilt and shame making them wonder... Could Jesus really be alive and if he were alive what would he say to them now? Would he be angry? Disappointed? Would he remind them of how they had let him down?

Sometimes we do things we are ashamed of and all we want to do is hide. We don’t want to have to face those we have hurt or let down or offended.

And then - Jesus comes and stands among them.

No knocking. No warning. Just presence.

And his first words are not words of blame or disappointment. Not where were you? But simply, “Peace be with you.”

Peace—not only for their fear, but for their failure. Peace that restores. Peace that heals. Peace that meets them exactly where they are. In their fear. In their locked spaces - the physical, emotional and spiritual ones.

And he still does that today. We all have our “locked rooms.” Places we keep closed off - fear about the future, grief we carry, doubts we don't voice, guilt we try to hide, regrets we cannot undo. Parts of our lives we would rather not have exposed.

Yet the risen Christ does not stay outside. He comes into those very places and speaks: “Peace be with you.” This is not just a greeting—it is a gift that restores what is broken and frees us from what binds us. He extends a peace that heals rather than a judgment that hurts.

And then Jesus breathes on them and says: “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Giving them new life. And he sends them out – “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” So not only are they forgiven but they are also commissioned. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, to continue his work and to make God's love and forgiveness known to others - “If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20: 23).

As one commentator points out, this is not about giving the disciples power to control forgiveness like a gatekeeper or judge. It is about being messengers of God's love.

(Elisabeth Johnson, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-of-easter/commentary-on-john-2019-31-10#>.)

To forgive is to release—to set free and to restore. To retain is not to control forgiveness, but to withhold the message that sets people free.”

The disciples are being sent to live and share a love that releases others.

Because an encounter with Jesus is never meant to be kept to ourselves.

It is always meant to be shared. And we see how this encounter with Jesus changes them.

In the reading from Acts, Peter and the disciples tell their story.

Peter stands before a crowd and boldly proclaims the risen Christ. This is the same Peter who once hid in fear. The same Peter who denied even knowing Jesus. Now he speaks with courage and conviction: Jesus is alive.

Peter encountered the risen Christ—and it changed everything for him. Fear has become courage. Failure has become witness. Despair has become hope.

That is what an encounter with the risen Christ does.

And then there's Thomas... He was not there the first time. And when the others tell him what they have seen, he struggles to believe. "Unless I see... unless I touch... I will not believe." He is honest about his doubt.

And when Jesus comes again, he does not reject or shame Thomas. Instead, he invites him: "Put your finger here... see my hands." Jesus meets Thomas exactly where he is. And Jesus meets us where we are.

Thomas' encounter with Jesus leads him to respond with one of the most profound confessions in Scripture: "My Lord and my God!" And once again, we see what happens when someone truly encounters the risen Christ. And we learn that doubt is not the end of faith. Sometimes it is the doorway to a deeper encounter.

Like the disciples, we all have "locked rooms" - places shaped by fear, doubt, and past failure. But the good news today is that locked doors do not stop Jesus, and they do not define his people .

He comes to us. Speaks peace into our fear. Breathes new life into our brokenness. And he sends us out into the world.

And as we go, lives are changed. Others are set free. And we ourselves are transformed.

May we have the courage to receive his peace, feel his breath, and go out to release the world in the name of Jesus—our Lord and our God.

Amen