

It is a great pleasure to be here with this morning. This is obviously a very meaningful moment for me to have the privilege to preach, to reflect on God's, once more as Curate at Christ Church Vienna.

This is a significant time of transition for me, my family and I also know for Christ Church. Looking back it is almost exactly six years ago that that I was ordained in Christ church, and Rev. John Downey from my home town Erie preached a sermon on this very scripture, I will reflect on today.

I would like to begin by pointing out that all of our readings today emphasize the importance faith. The prophet Habakkuk, depicts faith as patient perseverance, indeed the prophet is one who keeps watch, in waiting and abiding in truth until the fulfilment has come, our verse concludes with the "the righteous live by their faith." In our appointed Psalm for today, we faith is described as trust waiting in expectation for deliverance, encapsulated in this phrase, "... *my trust is in the Lord.*"

Faith as the act of trusting, I will return to this in a moment.

Our New Testament reading in Ephesians provides words of encouragement for believers to find security and encourage their status as being accepted as Citizen's, not strangers, in the household of God.

Lastly, in our Gospel reading we see an image that contrasts sharply with those of earlier readings. Thomas, famously doubting the other disciples' testimony of the resurrection of the lord.

Returning to my early reference to the psalm, I would like to focus on the the word "trust" when reflecting upon that nature of faith.

For in the Gospel reading in ancient Greek the word used is *Pistos* which is translated as or "belief" was rooted an understanding of trust.- trusty, faithful. The word is used almost 70 times in many different books in the New Testament, so we encounter it quite a bit.

The word was commonly used in reference to people who showed themselves to be honest and dependable in acts of business, in the following of commands or in fulfilling their duties. Such people worthy of trust or could be relied upon.

To paraphrase the encounter of Jesus with Thomas we see that his doubts are about an inability to "believe" yes, but his lack of belief seems to be more deeply rooted in a lack of trust. Thomas is initially unable to

trust in the witness of his Fellow disciples and even in the person of Jesus before him.

Understood this way, when the resurrected Jesus addresses Thomas in person his words could be understood this way:

“Don’t be (*apistos*), untrusting but ” (*pistos*) “trust (v. 27b).

Interpreted this way, I come way with a much stronger sense of what I believe is called from Thomas and from us in being faithful, a sense of Trust.

Perhaps Thomas’s scepticism is understandable, but Jesus even while presenting himself does not say “Thomas, now that you have empirically observed my presence and these scars you now have a sense of certainty in my resurrection and the new life I offer to the world”

While he still presents him with what he needs to see his words to him are stop being untrusting and to trust him.

Think about it in this way. If you say to me if you fall I will catch, I may say yes “I believe you” but if you ask me to fall backwards into your arms promising to catch me, that is something different. Do I really trust you enough to let me self go, to do it? Do I trust that even though my eyes cannot see where I am going you will reach out and catch me? Can I rely upon you?

This is the stronger sense that word trust conveys for us today.

Understanding faith as the act of trusting, involves experience of moving one step further of applying and praying for belief to become present in our lives.

In the church if we have trust, then like Habakkuk and Psalmist we live with a sense of patience, of hopeful expectation of what of is come.

What Jesus does with Thomas is not judge his doubts, which in many ways are understandable, which is why he allows Thomas to come touch his wounds. If that is his initial hesitation, but even upon presenting his resurrected body, his invitation is to take the next step to trust.

It is worth noting that it seems that is not Thomas’s touching of the scars that brings faith but presence of Jesus and his invitation to a new kind of life and a new kind of trust in him. Every time we approach this altar to

receive the Eucharist we are being invited to receive and experience the reality of resurrected Christ, recalling his suffering, we are being invited to an experience to trust in him.

The Church must constantly be reminded of what Trust in God means. In my view a trusting faith, is confident (not prideful) but one that rests on assurances in promises of the scriptures and renewal in the living of trust in the life of the Church.

A trusting and confident faith does not aim reorient the life of faith according to the standards defined by our doubts, or even worse to attempt to replace faith as trust, a sense of certainty, Thomas wants certainty and even while Jesus presents himself to him, his message is for Thomas to trust.

Brothers and Sisters, if I have any words before this next big step in our life and ministry that I would like for you to hear. It is that there is enough in the prophets, in the words of the Ephesians the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. There is no need to create further proofs or litmus tests of Christian belief than to follow the call to trust in him. Attempts to turn faith as act of trust into a certainty result in turning the Gospel into yet another narrow ideology or the endless pursuit of so-called signs of righteousness or special gifts or blessings that go beyond what is provided in the words of Ephesians.

I believe that Christians can live with an openness to the world, to others and their doubts as long as we know where our trust is placed.

The prophet Habakkuk writes, "Look at the proud! their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith." Narrow exclusivism and hard-line views are signs of pride not trust. Such pride is like a fortress of fortress around the Church and it is actually rooted insecurity and doubt. This leads to all kinds of heresies, many of which are being visited upon the Churches in my home country such a sense of Racial or Class superiority, Christian nationalism, prosperity Gospel any of the new ever sprouting new fundamentalisms emerging around us. In my view these are not expressions of living faith that is rooted in trust of the promises of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' calls those who have not seen, (who do not have certainty) but still trust "blessed". At Christ Church what I appreciate very much is that

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this is a “blessed” community that seeking to live and act on that on trust. Trust that promises of Gospel and that that community who gathers as a body around a shared meal is enough.

My prayer, is that even when this is challenged this community will continue to Trust. To trust in him and to seek live in trust with another not trying manipulate or seek advantage over one another. But to continue to gather at the invitation Jesus to grow in trust gathering around that table.

To continually reach out to receive him. I close now with my final interpretation of the verses from our Gospel today.

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. **But these are written so that you may come to Trust that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through Trusting in him you may have life in his name.** “*

Amen.