The 4th Sunday of Easter ~ Sunday, April 26, 2026
"Joy Takes Root: Joy Survives Doubt"
Psalm 73 // Genesis 15:1–6 // John 20:24–31

Joy doesn't appear all at once, nor does it arrive in_____conditions. It takes root_____–sometimes in grief, sometimes in fear, sometimes in confusion.

The resurrection of Jesus doesn't_____the struggles of life overnight, but it does plant something deeper than circumstances–a living_____that grows stronger over time.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Beneath these words is something deeply human: disappointment that has learned to_____itself. Thomas had given his heart to_____once before, and that hope had been nailed to a cross.

Doubt isn't as_____as we sometimes pretend. It can appear quietly in the corners of faith–in moments of_____, in seasons of suffering, or in times when God feels strangely_____.

Yet the good news of this passage is that Jesus doesn't_____doubters. He meets them. Not with anger or shame, but with_____, mercy, and truth. And when He does, something remarkable happens: joy_____doubt.

3 LESSONS FROM THOMAS' ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN JESUS

Lesson #1: _____.
"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came." (John 20:24)

Thomas wasn't with them. This small detail carries more_____than we might realize.

"Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." (John 20:25)

Although these words sound stubborn and almost_____, before we judge Thomas too quickly, it's worth remembering what he'd just lived through.

Disappointment has a way of_____the heart, not because we want to resist faith, but because we're afraid to_____again.

"O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless?" (Genesis 15:2)

This isn't rebellion or_____; it's the voice of a faithful man wrestling with delay. Abraham still speaks to God, he still addresses Him as Lord, but his heart is tired of_____.

"But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped." (Psalm 73:2)

The psalmist hadn't completely fallen, but he felt dangerously close. His footing felt _____, and the ground beneath him no longer felt_____.

That's what doubt often looks like–not a sudden rejection of faith, but a slow _____of certainty. A gradual slipping of_____. A quiet wondering whether what we once believed so strongly still holds true. And more often than not, doubt grows in the soil of disappointment and_____.

Doubt doesn't always mean faith is_____. Sometimes it means faith is struggling under the weight of disappointment.

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick." (Proverbs 13:12)

These Those words aren't cynical, they're_____. Waiting can be painful. Delayed answers can leave us_____. And when hope feels postponed long enough, doubt begins to whisper its questions. However, here's the truth we need to hold onto: God isn't_____by honest questions.

Faith isn't the absence of questions; it's the_____to keep bringing those questions to God. This matters, because doubt left unattended can grow into _____, but doubt brought honestly before the Lord can become the doorway to deeper_____.

Lesson #2: _____.
"Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them." (John 20:26)

We often imagine that God should answer_____–that clarity should come quickly, that doubt should be resolved overnight. However, Scripture shows us again and again that God's timing is rarely_____.

Waiting isn't_____time in God's kingdom. In fact, sometimes it's the place where_____is quietly being prepared.

"Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'" (John 20:26)

Fear hadn't completely disappeared and_____still lingered. Yet, Jesus still came. He didn't wait until their faith was_____. He didn't wait until Thomas figured things out on his own. He entered the room exactly as it was–locked doors,_ _____hearts, lingering doubt.

"Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.'" (John 20:27)

There's no scolding, no harsh_____, no lecture about weak faith. Jesus doesn't shame Thomas–He_____him.

"He brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars...so shall your offspring be.'" (Genesis 15:5)

God gave Abraham something to see–not to satisfy_____, but to strengthen _____.

"Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." (Psalm 73:17)

Clarity came not through argument, but through_____. Not through debate, but through drawing near to God. That's how faith grows–not through force, but through_____.

Many believers carry private doubts, but feel_____to admit them. They worry that speaking their questions aloud will reveal_____. They assume that God expects perfect confidence, unshakable certainty, and immediate trust.

"A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench." (Isaiah 42:3)

That's the_____of God: Gentle with the weak. Patient with the uncertain. Faithful with the struggling. Jesus doesn't crush fragile faith–He_____it.

We don't need to_____our doubts from Him. We can bring them honestly before God in prayer. We can wrestle with them in Scripture. We can carry them into worship, trusting that the presence of Christ isn't reserved for the confident, but offered to the_____.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." (James 4:8)

Lesson #3: _____.
He offers this proof, not to_____Thomas, but to_____him.
"'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:28)

This is no hesitant whisper; it's the language of_____. Thomas' doubt doesn't destroy his faith, it_____it.

"And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." (Gen 15:6)

Abraham's faith didn't emerge from perfect_____, but from wrestling, waiting, questioning–and then_____.

"Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:23-24)

Notice the shift. He began uncertain, he ends_____. That's what happens when doubt encounters the living God–not abstract ideas, not clever arguments, but the living presence of Christ. Faith grows stronger because it has been_____.

Some of the strongest believers aren't those who never doubted, but those who brought their doubts honestly before Jesus and found Him_____.

"I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

Doubt doesn't have to be the_____of faith. When brought to Jesus, it can become the beginning of deeper_____.

"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

That's the joy that_____doubt–not because all our questions vanish, but because Jesus proves Himself_____again and again. And faith strengthened through struggle often becomes faith that can't easily be _____.

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Like the psalmist in Psalm 73, our footing may feel_____, but God holds our hand. Like Abraham in Genesis 15, our waiting may feel_____, but God remains true to His promises. And like Thomas in John 20, our doubts may be real, but they're never beyond the_____of the risen Jesus.

The risen Jesus still comes into locked rooms. Still meets_____. Still speaks peace into troubled hearts. And when He does, something beautiful happens. Not because doubt disappears overnight, but because Christ proves Himself_____again. And when faith encounters the living Christ, joy always_____doubt.