

## **“After Shocks”**

### **Sermon – April 12, 2026 Stone Presbyterian Church**

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Last week we discussed being “all shook up” from the literal and metaphorical seismic shift as recorded in Matthew’s gospel with the earthquake and the resurrection of Jesus.

This week we look at the aftershocks of that event, flipping first to John’s gospel who discusses the events that immediately follow.

Now in John’s gospel, Mary Magdalene alone goes to the tomb, finds it empty, tells Peter and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and they also confirm the tomb is empty. Then Jesus appears to Mary and commissions her as the Apostle to the Apostles, the first evangelist, and to proclaim the resurrection. She goes and tells the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!”

And what do the disciples do in response to Mary Magdalene’s proclamation of the risen Jesus, of abundant life, of a world forever changed and open with possibility? Do they jump for joy and go proclaiming in the streets, “He is risen!”? They do not.

We hear in today’s passage from John 20:19 that very evening, which would have been last Sunday, the disciples were huddled together behind locked doors “for fear of the Judeans” implying specifically the leaders that had Jesus crucified rather than a mob of people storming the house.

Peter and “the other disciple” saw the tomb was empty. Mary told them Jesus had appeared and talked with her. So, why are they afraid?

You could speculate that—perhaps—they were also afraid of Jesus. After all, Peter had denied him and all the disciples had deserted him. How would you feel if you abandoned a loved one to torture and death and found out they were back from the dead?

So, when Jesus appears, what is the first thing he says? “Shalom—peace—be with you.” \*Now\* they rejoice, \*after\* seeing him in the flesh.

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Thomas, who is called the Twin, is not there, though. We aren't told why but we know from previous passages that he is a straight shooter, a practical guy.

When Jesus wanted to risk his life to raise Lazarus from the dead, Thomas was the one who told his fellow disciples, “Let us also go that we may die with him.”

And when at the last supper Jesus says, “You know where I am going”, Thomas alone says, “We do *\*not\** know where you are going.”

So, maybe Thomas simply isn't concerned about his welfare; Jesus is dead and that's that and he's off doing other things.

When the other disciples tell Thomas, “We have seen the Lord!”, he doesn't believe them. He wants physical proof. We give him a hard time historically, but he just wants what they had. After all, they didn't believe when Mary told *\*them\**.

A week later they are now all together and Jesus appears again. Again, Jesus first says, “Peace be with you.” Now Thomas believes.

The aftershocks continue six weeks later in the lectionary passage today from Acts 2 where Peter tells an audience in Jerusalem that the resurrected Jesus reigns at God's right hand, and that Jesus' ministry continues through his followers, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

He delivers the sermon on the day of Pentecost, immediately after the Holy Spirit arrives. Why, then, do we hear this passage only a week after Easter? Because this is the first public proclamation of the gospel in the book of Acts with Peter announcing Jesus' resurrection.

Further, it reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus and the giving of the Holy Spirit are integrally related.

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We then jump forward decades later with today’s epistle lesson from the first letter of Peter, though likely not actually written by him.

The letter is addressed to believers living in the Roman provinces in Asia Minor. Though systemwide persecution of Christians not had not really started yet, Christians who were not citizens -- and this may well have been the majority of the Christians in this region -- were vulnerable to abusive treatment by their neighbors and by local authorities.

As resident aliens and visiting foreigners they were culturally and religiously different from the majority population. They paid taxes and contributed to the local economy, but they could not inherit property, and they were denied the legal protections that citizens enjoyed.

Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a country as a believer and face prejudice, ostracism, and abuse because of your ethnic background and citizen status?

It is to outsiders such as these that 1 Peter is written. God has given them the sense of belonging, the inheritance, and the honor that their society denies them.

They have been reborn into God’s own family. Their neighbors may see them as worthless, but God sees the tested value of their faith as more precious than gold.

Through the resurrection of Jesus, God has given them new life in the present and the promise of salvation and an eternal home when Jesus is revealed at the end of days.

By raising Jesus from the dead and by giving them new life, God has showed them who God is and what God can do.

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Though they did not witness the resurrection of Jesus, and though even now they do not see him in the flesh, they know him and put their trust in him.

1 Peter calls on despairing Christians to look to God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as the only source of hope, peace, and eternal love.

The writer reminds us that we have been given a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection activates a living hope.

Perhaps at no other time in our lives have we needed a hope that is alive than we do today

A hope that can animate us and allows us to seek the light in darkness, to hold onto what we know to be true when everything seems questionable.

Hope is kept alive by nurturing it; it is sustained by looking beyond tomorrow to a promised future, remembering that we have an inheritance that is not only awaiting us, but that is also being protected. Faith in Jesus Christ makes this all possible.

Jesus cannot be stopped by our locked doors. Jesus comes to us as he came to the first disciples, right in the midst of our fear, pain, doubt, and confusion. He comes speaking peace, breathing into our anxious lives the breath of the Holy Spirit.

And he keeps sending us out of our safe, locked rooms, into a world that, like us, so desperately needs his gifts of life and peace.

The aftershocks from that first Easter morning continue through today with our message to the world, “He is risen! Peace be with you.”

In the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer.  
Amen.