



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 2

April 12, 2026

Christ Among Us

John 20:19–31

¹⁹ Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴ Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus has your believing in mind today. He has your believing, your repenting, and your being forgiven in mind. And for all that, He has His ministers in place for you and gives them gifts, that you may believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and so by believing – with His Words in your ears and His Flesh and Blood on your lips – you may have life in His Name.

Believing always flows from Jesus' Word and Body. On the day of His resurrection, angels preached the Good News to the women. Later, the Lord appeared to the women. They clasped His feet and worshiped Him, Matthew says.

Then, the women told the news to the Apostles. "He is risen, as He said." And then, as preaching always leads to Jesus' Body, to more comfort, Jesus Himself appeared and said to them: "Peace be with you." Then He showed them His hands and His side. Believing and Christ's Words, Christ's Flesh and Blood, Christ's Wounds, Christ's Body – these always go together.



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 2

April 12, 2026

Fellow believers, you who have your ears filled with Jesus' speaking "Peace" to you . . . you whose heads are drenched with everything God gave you in Holy Baptism . . . whose mouths will soon be fed once again with Jesus' Flesh and Blood for your salvation . . . believing rests in JESUS, not in you! It rests in His Gifts – what He delivers into the hands and mouths of sinful men whom HE sends as He Himself was sent. Believing apart from that is not believing. At least, it's not the kind of believing that saves.

For some reason unknown to us, Thomas had not joined the other Apostles that first Easter. All the rest – except for Judas, whose “repenting and believing” left him hanging from a rope – and Thomas – who had some other place to be, apparently – [all the rest] were together, with the doors locked, for fear of the Jews. Please don't get the impression that these Ten were great believers. They're just like we are – worried about things that God has under control. They're afraid of men, regardless of the promises of God. So they huddle. They hide. And Thomas wasn't even there – which is too bad for Thomas. Because He wasn't there when their Believing came and stood among them, saying: "Peace be with you!"

But, since Thomas wasn't with them, he did not believe. Even when they brought the preaching to him, saying: "We have seen Him, Thomas! He is risen! And your sins are forgiven!" He still wouldn't believe.

Believing and repenting and forgiveness and salvation all show up in Jesus, Who has words to speak and scars to show! And Thomas wasn't there. No wonder he doubted. There isn't any faith apart from Jesus! Whatever reason Thomas had for being absent when the Service of the Lord began, let's learn once and for all that life apart from Jesus and His Gifts is life sunk deep in doubt, despair, and disbelieving. We do well, beloved, to keep ourselves from the demonic teaching that suggests we can believe just fine while running from God's Word and Sacraments; while keeping Jesus' speaking from our ears, and His wounds out of our mouth!

But Jesus showing up again today for sinners – now THERE'S something to believe in! Christ is RISEN! (He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!) And He preaches peace and life, forgiveness and salvation, into your ears today. Because of that, you have eternal life.

Thomas confessed what is true of every sinner: "I will not believe!" Unless he saw for himself; unless God acceded to his demands and expectations; unless God conformed to his own religion, Thomas wouldn't believe.

The vast majority will never confess like that! Just the opposite! God has given us His preaching, that Christ was killed for our salvation and raised for our justification. Do we hold that preaching sacred and gladly hear and learn it? You know the answer, but still we protest: "Oh, I believe!" Christ has breathed out His Spirit and given His authority . . . to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness as long as we do not repent. Do we run to repentance or do we spurn it? And yet, we're certain: "I still believe!"



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 2

April 12, 2026

We would even rather be cut off from Jesus' Body and Blood than to be cut off from the frivolous things we'd rather do. Only Thomas speaks the truth: "I will not believe!"

We don't know the kind of care this man received that week from Christ's disciples. Did they hold his sins against him, as long as he went on in his un-believing? We don't know. Whatever Thomas got that week from men who had the breath of Christ – to forgive or not forgive his sins – to preach salvation or withhold it – whatever Thomas got, the Spirit gives us this: "A week later, His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them!"

Thank God for that! Thomas gathered with the others that day, and that was his salvation. The preaching of the Ten was true! The words they spoke to Thomas, about being damned if he continued in his false belief . . . about being saved by welcoming Jesus and His Gifts – all that was true. Jesus said so when He said to Thomas: "Stop doubting and believe!" Believe what? Believe what the Ten had told him. For what they said was only what the Lord had given. And so, confirmed in that, Thomas was admitted to the Savior's Body: "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in My side."

And THERE is true believing, dear Christian. All in Jesus. To sinners imprisoned in their doubt and fear, He preaches Peace and gives us Flesh and Blood for our believing! This sets us free. The Body pierced for our transgressions, the Blood poured out for our forgiveness – these, the Lord still has . . . and has among us! Delivered into the hands of sinful men for DISTRIBUTION – to be handed out, delivered into the ears and mouths of sinful men, like Thomas . . . like you . . . and me.

These are our faith, beloved, for our forgiveness, our being saved! Thomas teaches that when He confesses: "My Lord and My God!" And Jesus teaches that when He says to Thomas: "Because you have seen Me, you believe; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Jesus does not say: "Blessed are those who have not HEARD." But, "blessed are those who have not SEEN." By hearing, Christ comes to you with His forgiveness in the Words Christ gives His Ministers to speak. By eating and drinking, Christ gives us His Body and Blood in bread and wine. Sinners aren't lost because they do such wicked things. They're lost – WE are lost – because we will not have the speaking, the preaching, the Body and Blood of Jesus!

So, like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk. Crave the Gospel purely preached and the Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution. He isn't dead anymore. He is risen! And He didn't drop His Body off somewhere to go on magically inside your heart. He is where His Body is, to save you! Where His words direct you to His wounds; where they tell you: "Peace be with you! Take and eat, this is My Body. Take and drink, this is My Blood! Stop doubting and believe!"

And if you don't believe that? Come, confess with Thomas! There are words you



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 2

April 12, 2026

need to hear, and someone God has put in place to speak them! If you've strayed away and fallen into sin? You have a pastor to confess that to, but more importantly, for hearing from that Christ now holds nothing against you. Jesus died. Jesus rose. Jesus breathed and sent out His disciples. Therefore, I forgive you all your sins.

And if you want to stay away from Jesus' Service, from the Gifts He died and rose to put in place for you? If you want to go on in your sinful ways of living, like there isn't any God Who sees, as if Christ is six feet under, so it's no concern to Him the way you live? If you think your sins aren't that bad, that they can't damn you . . . if you don't want the Lord's forgiveness, then I have to tell you: Your sins are not forgiven! They are still your own to deal with, and you will deal with them for all eternity.

I hope Thomas heard such words from the Ten that week. He should have! We should hear them every time we behave as if God doesn't matter and we matter most. And we should hear them a whole lot more than we've been willing.

Why? Because Christ wants to spoil your day? Because He wants to leave us in our prisons? No! Because He wants to show us just what prisons we're in! What darkness! What despair! What unbelief! He wants to give us true repentance! Wants to wrap us up where true forgiveness and believing is going on! In HIM! In the Words He speaks to us, which point us to His Flesh and Blood nailed to a cross in our behalf . . . and to His Water poured upon our heads in His Name, which saves us . . . and to His Flesh and Blood laid out each Sunday on this Table. Here is where the risen Christ is still among us.

Blessed are you, who see nothing particularly miraculous in that, but hear what Jesus says about it anyway: It is your salvation. It's your life. It's your peace with God and one another. Blessed are you, dear Christian, to find your believing in all of that. And when you don't, remember, I have words you need to hear. Christ wouldn't give them to me if you didn't need to hear them. So, hear them . . . and believe: I forgive you all your sins! In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen