

Date: April 12, 2026 (Easter 2)

1. Texts: Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Ps. 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31.
2. Subject: proclamation.
3. Topic: evangelism through our own lives.
4. Aim: challenge, encourage.
5. Proposition: "As Jesus' signs challenged people to believe, so are his signs in our lives to do."

WE ARE THE BOOK OF SIGNS

St. John's Gospel is often called, "The Book of Signs". "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."¹ There are actually seven signs. They include healing the nobleman's son and the paralytic at Bethesda as well as feeding the 5000 and walking on water.² With each sign, the identity of Jesus is proven anew, and the witnesses are challenged to believe. Genuine belief leads to genuine and abundant life, as Jesus himself promised.³ In John's Gospel, signs play an important role in the proclamation of the good news.

We heard about it in today's Gospel reading. Thomas the Twin was demanding a sign, some proof of Jesus' identity and truth. "Show me the nail marks in his hands. Show me the spear wound in his side. Once I have proof, then I will believe." Well, Thomas got the sign he demanded. He also believed: "Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"⁴

In his Gospel, John made it clear that the result of such belief was genuine and saving faith. Belief leads to genuine and eternal life.

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 believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.⁵

So, we're facing a bit of an uneasy spot. Thomas could actually have seen the resurrected Christ. We can't. At least, not in the flesh. John's Gospel

¹ John 2:11.

² John 4:46-54, 5:1-15, 6:5-14, 6:16-21.

³ John 10:10.

⁴ John 20:28.

⁵ John 20:30-31.

acknowledged this: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”⁶ Like Thomas, we might benefit from a sign. Unlike Thomas, we can’t have the same sign.

But we have a kind of advantage over Thomas. We have two sources of signs.

The first source is Scripture. Thomas did not have the New Testament. The Old Testament was not as clear about the Messiah as would be needed by the time Jesus came on the scene. There was no written guideline for Thomas.

There is for us. The Bible is the authoritative and normative library of God’s dealings with his chosen people, the Jews. We get to see not only the seven signs of John’s Gospel, but all the other signs in all the other books. We have a huge number of signs from which to draw belief.

The second source of signs is more current and actual than Scripture. We have the signs shared with us through other believers. These are the signs of God working in and through other people. We have the privilege of witnessing God at work in the lives of others.

This source is not as consistent nor as authoritative as Scripture. Sometimes, disciples are just not emotionally or spiritually ready to allow God to be seen through their lives. Sometimes, disciples are actually frightened by the thought of revealing God to others. We can’t rely on other believers in the same way that we can rely on Scripture.

But, because other disciples show signs of God’s presence in contexts similar to our own, these signs really are more immediate and can have a greater impact than the stories of Scripture.

We have to move in two directions with this theology.

⁶ John 20:29.

First, we have to look for God's signs in Scripture. This doesn't mean we have to take everything in the Bible literally. God forbid that we should ever do that! But we do have to read Scripture carefully and look for God's signs in what it says. We read Scripture and then ask ourselves, "What is God saying to me through this reading?" We look for and anticipate seeing God's signs in Scripture.

Then, we have to prepare ourselves to be God's signs for other people. Through our words and actions we reflect God's presence onto other people. We become God's signs for them. They see God's life reflected in our lives. We take God's signs which we see in Scripture and become those signs for others.

But remember: the signs in John's Gospel challenge people to believe and so to have eternal life in the presence of God. Thomas' response to the signs of Jesus' scars serve the same function in our lives. So, it is not enough just to be good, kind and loving. Rather our goodness, kindness and love are to challenge people to believe that Jesus is the Christ of God who has saved humanity.

It's kind of difficult, isn't it. We'll have to practice saying things like,

- "God encourages me to be kind."
- "Well, I don't think I would be as aware of other people's needs, if it weren't for Jesus."
- "I honestly believe that God talks to me through the Bible. I just have to train myself to listen."

It might be easier for us, if John hadn't written his gospel and if Thomas hadn't needed a sign of the resurrection. But both were apostles that Jesus himself chose. So, I guess we'll just have to look for signs of God's work in the world and in ourselves.

AMEN.