

Sermon Wesley Box Hill 12 April 2026

GET OUT OF THE HOUSE! – John 20: 19-31

Greetings once again in the precious name of our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ.

The story we have from our Gospel reading today begins with the disciples experiencing abject fear. Our reading tells us: “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, “the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews ...”

It’s been one week since Easter, one week since the chaos and excitement, one week since the empty tomb, one week since our first “Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.”

It’s one week after the resurrection, and the disciples are in the same place that they were that Easter night. They are in the same house behind the same locked doors. If the resurrection is such a big deal, such a life changing event, why are they still stuck in the same place?

What difference has the empty tomb made? How has it changed them? Has it let them see themselves and their world differently? Has it done anything for them? It doesn’t look as if it’s made much difference. They are in the same house behind the same locked doors as they were a week ago.

What’s changed? I wonder, one week after Easter, what has Christ’s resurrection done for us? Is your life different? Do you see and engage the world in new ways? What difference has the empty tomb made in your life over the last week?

When I look at my life it looks a whole lot like it did last Sunday, the week before, and the week before that. When I look at the world, it looks pretty much the same as before. I used to hear today’s gospel reading and be critical of the disciples.

Why are they stuck in the same place? They should have done better than that. After all, death has been defeated. “Christ is risen. Alleluia.” Why aren’t their lives different?

I was really asking about my own life. Why isn’t my life different after Easter? Why am I stuck in the same place? I should have done better than that. I should be living the resurrection better, more powerfully, more fully, more authentically, than what I am. After all, “The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.”

I’ve begun, however, to hear today’s gospel differently from how I used to. Here’s what I think today’s gospel is telling us: Christ’s resurrection is a big deal. The empty tomb is a life changing event. The resurrection does make a difference in our lives; and, it also takes time!

Resurrection takes time! It is not a one-time event. It’s something that we grow into. It’s a process. It’s a way of being and a life to be lived. By the grace of God, we evolve into resurrected people through our relationships and the circumstances of our lives. God wastes nothing.

Every day we are stepping into the resurrected life. It’s not always easy and some days are just plain hard. I wonder if we sometimes come to Easter Sunday and the empty tomb

expecting to wake up on Monday to a whole new life and world. I am guessing that you awoke on Easter Monday to the same life and world you had on Good Friday. I did.

It's not because the resurrection failed or because Jesus didn't do "the Jesus thing" in our lives. It's because the Jesus thing takes time.

I have a very good friend Jim who was best man at my wedding. He's the one wearing the hat with someone looking through his telescope.

He is right into astronomy and follows solar eclipses all around the world.

Thinking about solar eclipses has prompted me to ask the question:

What if the whole experience of Holy Week and Easter Sunday is like a solar eclipse? Before Palm Sunday the sun is shining brightly. Starting on Palm Sunday, the light of Jesus' life begins to be eclipsed. Each day of the week it gets darker until we reach totality on Good Friday and Holy Saturday when we sit in darkness and wait.

Holy Saturday is when the loss we experienced on Good Friday becomes very real. You know as well as I that Good Friday comes to us in lots of different ways – the death of a loved one, a diagnosis, a failure, a betrayal, a divorce, a shattered dream, a break up, a break down. It's the day when a piece of our life is lost or taken from us.

On Holy Saturday we sit with our loss and realise again and again that it really is gone. It really did happen. It's not just a nightmare from which we will awaken.

It is a day when everything we thought we knew, believed in, and counted on to be true is called into question. What was is no longer. What will be is not yet. All we can do is wait. And wait. And wait.

Then "on the first day of the week" the sun rises, a new day dawns, and the light returns. That's not just a Holy Week and Easter Sunday pattern.

It's a pattern in each of our lives.

What is eclipsing the resurrection in our lives today? Every one of us could tell stories about times when our lives were eclipsed; the changes, the losses, the darkness, the new light. Unlike my friend Jim, I've never looked at a total solar eclipse, but I have lived through them, and so have you.

Maybe we need to let go of the fact of the empty tomb and start claiming the story of resurrection. There's a difference between facts and story.

Facts are one dimensional, stories are multidimensional. Facts inform the mind; stories touch the heart. Facts transmit information, stories transform lives.

Think about it like this. A fact is static, like a snapshot of a particular moment in time. A story is dynamic, like a movie that takes us across time. The empty tomb is a fact! Resurrection is a story!

Maybe we need to begin to understand resurrection as the movie of our life instead of a snapshot of Christ's life. The fact of the empty tomb is not the story of the resurrection. The facts of Jesus life are not the story of Jesus.

The facts of your life and my life are not the story of our lives. The facts are just the starting point for the story. The fact of the empty tomb is the starting point for the resurrection story. Whatever facts you woke up to on Easter Monday are simply the starting point for your story of resurrection. Too often, however, we take the facts as the entire story.

Isn't that what we've done with St. Thomas? What facts come to mind when you hear his name? He was a doubter. "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." That Thomas doubted may be the only fact that comes to mind. It is so prevalent that we call him Doubting Thomas.

What if that fact, however, is just the starting point for his resurrection? What if it is not the whole story? Do you know the end of Thomas's story? Do you know where he died?

He died in India. He was the apostle to the people of India. He brought the gospel of Christ to India. He died a martyr after he was run through with five spears by five soldiers. That doesn't sound much like a doubter, does it?

It sounds like someone who grew and changed, someone for whom the resurrection of Christ was real, someone for whom the empty tomb made a difference. It just took a little time, as it does for most, maybe all of us.

We know Doubting Thomas. Let's not forget Confessing Thomas! He's in today's gospel as well. "My Lord and my God!" With those words Thomas has recognized and named a new relationship, a new worldview, a new way of being.

Somewhere, between Doubting Thomas and Confessing Thomas, is the story of resurrection in Thomas' life. All that stuff about Doubting Thomas, the fact of his disbelief, is just Thomas's starting place, nothing more and nothing less. It's neither good nor bad. It's a starting place.

What if where we start is less important than where we go, where we end? We all have our starting places. What is your starting place?

What are the facts of your life today? The starting place for the story of our resurrection is whatever it is. Whatever your life is today, whatever your circumstances are, that's the starting point for your story of resurrection.

So, if you're dealing with deep loneliness, sorrow, and loss, that's your starting point. That's the room that Christ enters! If you are locked in a house of fear, confusion, or darkness, that's your starting point and the place in which Jesus stands. If illness, old age, disability, or uncertainty are facts of your life, that's your starting point. That's the room that Christ enters!

If you feel lost, betrayed, disappointed, overwhelmed, that's your starting point. That's the room that Christ enters! If joy, gratitude, and celebration are the facts of your life today, that's the starting point for your story of resurrection. That's the room that Christ enters!

All those things I just described, and a thousand others, are the many ways that the doors of our house get locked. Whatever it might be for you, it is just the starting point. The great tragedy is not that the disciples are in the same house behind the same locked doors. That's just their starting place. The great tragedy will be if the disciples refuse to unlock the doors, refuse to open the doors, and refuse to get out the house.

Perhaps we are more like the disciples than we want to admit!
How often have you or I locked the door to keep Jesus out? Maybe some part of your past, something you are particularly ashamed of. Maybe some fear for the future.

Sometimes, we are frightened of what Jesus might think, what Jesus might do. So, we lock up our heart, try to keep Jesus out. Locking ourselves in, for fear of what might happen. Sometimes, we are not even honest with ourselves about why we are hiding or what we are hiding from.

What are the doors that are locked in your life? What are the things that have kept you stuck in the same place? That's just the starting place.

Don't judge it as good or bad, right or wrong. It's just where you are and it's the place Christ shows up.

It happened twice in today's gospel. Both times the disciples are in the same house behind the same locked doors and Jesus shows up. He stands in the midst of them. The walls and the locked doors of their house could not keep Jesus out.

Similarly, the walls and locked doors of your house will not keep Jesus out. Jesus steps into the midst of our house, through the locked doors, and breathes peace and life into us. He breathes peace and hope into us.

He breathes peace and courage into us. He breathes peace and strength into us.

That breath of peace is the key that unlocks the door. Take a deep breath, take it all in, let it fill and enliven you. Let it give you the hope, courage, and strength to unlock and open the doors of your life, and then,

Get out of the house that you have been locked away in.

Amen.