The Second Sunday of Easter C
John 20:19-31
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth 28/04/2019
Greg Bensted

Grace, peace, and resurrection joy from Father God, our Risen Lord Jesus, and Holy Spirit. 'But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "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"' [John 20:24,25]. Let's pray:

Unless I see, I will not believe.

How many times in your life have you said something like (?): "That's impossible." "I can't imagine that in my wildest dreams." "I'll never get through this." "I just can't do it." "This is all there'll ever be." "That'll never happen." "That's just my lot in life." "When pigs fly."

I reckon we've all said something similar at one time or another. We've all bumped up against the impossible in our lives. And we all have our own view of what is and what isn't possible. Most of the time, our lives are limited to what we consider to be possible. We ponder a range of possibilities and then we make a decision, choose a direction for our life, take our next step; all within the boundaries of what is possible.

If that is truly how we think, then why are we here? Isn't life bigger than what we deem possible?

What if the impossible can be made real? What if the impossible really does happen? What if the impossible is possible?

That doesn't make any sense at all, does it? I can't explain how the impossible can be made possible, but I know that it does happen. I've seen it happen in my life and I know it's happened in your life too.

When my pastor in Kingaroy first suggested I should consider studying for the ministry, I laughed incredulously. Sure, I was an earnest, hard-working, and God-fearing man, but I was also very aware of my temperament, my tongue, and my misgivings; hardly pastor material. I told myself it was impossible. A sinner like me could not become a pastor. Yet, there was a restlessness I couldn't settle. There was something churning inside me that I couldn't understand. I kept protesting, but Matt persisted and by the end of a lousy day's fishing, he had me convinced that I should give it some serious thought. Apparently, Kathy always thought I had it in me. And here I am.

Think about your own life. When has something like that happened in your life? What did you consider an impossibility that became a reality, an impossibility that happened?
Maybe your heart melted with your first child and you thought you could never have more love than you did in that moment. Then your second child was born and the impossibility of more love became a reality. Or maybe it was just the opposite. Your heart was broken, shattered, and you knew you would never love again. Maybe you said that no one else could compare to that earlier love and you could never want anyone else. Or maybe it was just too painful and you vowed to never risk being hurt like that again. Either way you had closed the door on love and intimacy until he or she opened it in ways you never imagined possible.

Maybe you've had one of those times in life you thought you would never get through. You limped along going through the motions thinking, "Come Lord Jesus; come now and take me away from this misery!" It felt as if you had lost everything. Your grief and loss had locked out the possibility of a new life, but one day, something

happened. Something changed. The world looked brighter. You felt different. A door opened and what you once thought was impossible presented a new opportunity.

What if every one of these impossible situations of our life that becomes our new reality is an experience of resurrection? What if each one is a time when Jesus stepped through the locked door of our life? Isn't that what happened in today's gospel [John 20:19-31]?

It's the evening of Easter. The disciples are gathered in a room. The doors are locked because they are scared. It's impossible for someone to get in. They've made sure of that. Then the impossible happens. Jesus turns up. He's not dead. He's alive. He's not in the tomb. He comes and stands among them. He greets them with "Peace be with you" and breathes the Holy Spirit upon them. Not just once, but twice, Jesus steps into that room of frightened disciples hiding behind their locked doors of impossibility [John 20:19,26].

Have you ever considered that that kind of thing is happening all the time? And that it is as much a part of our lives as it was the disciples'?

The impossible turned possible isn't just the story of Easter. It's the story of Jesus. Jesus is always stepping through our locked doors of impossibility. That's the good news of his gospel.

Think about all the stories of impossibilities that became real:

- God became human in Jesus. Or as St John puts it, "The Word became flesh and lived among us" [John 1:14]. There's a reason he says, "Yet, the world did not know him... His own people did not accept him" [John 1:10-11]. It's impossible. Who would believe that God would become one of us?

- A virgin gives birth to a child. "How can this be?" [Luke 1:34]. That's not only Mary's question. Its ours too. It's impossible for a virgin to give birth. Isn't it?
- Water is turned into wine [John 2:1-11]. Don't we wish?!
- A large crowd is fed with two fish and five loaves of bread [John 6:1-13]. Until it happened Philip would never have thought it possible. "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little," he says [John 6:7].
- Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, is overcome with amazement as he witnesses the impossibility of the dead rising to life, as Jesus beckons his little twelve-year-old daughter with two words, "Talitha cum" [Ταλιθὰ κούμ]. Immediately she begins to walk about [Mark 5:41,42].
- Martha knows the impossibility of her brother, Lazarus, coming out of the tomb. "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days" [John 11:39]. And then the dead man walks out; death's door has been unlocked and opened.
- And then there's Jesus' own resurrection. The women's good news of the empty tomb seemed to the men "an idle tale, and they did not believe them" [Luke 24:11]. After all, dead men can't be brought back to life. It's impossible. And the tomb of death could never become the womb of new life, could it?

None of these things were possible until they happened. No-one can explain how any of it happened. I don't know how it has happened in my life. I don't know how it has happened in your life. But that doesn't mean things can't or didn't happen. We know better. We are "witnesses of these things" [Luke 24:48].

Unexplainable and impossible aren't the same thing. That's the paradox. With God, the impossible becomes possible even though we don't understand it. And when it does, doors are flung open and a whole new field of opportunity lies before us. Here I stand, a

fraudulent, broken, sin-filled human being, a pastor of God's holy people; something I still struggle to understand.

So what about you? What are the doors of impossibility for you today? What possibilities have you locked out of your life?

We all have our locked doors of impossibility. I wonder what is being unlocked and opened for you and me today.

We'll never know unless we consider the impossible, possible. So what if, instead of starting with what we consider possible, reasonable, realisable, we begin with the impossible. Let's not be trapped by what we think is possible. Let's go to the place of impossibility in our life. That's where Jesus lives; opening doors, breathing peace and filling us with his Holy Spirit. That's where new life begins. And that's where we want to be.

What if the impossible isn't really impossible? What if what we see as impossible is really just us not seeing and believing that Jesus really is "Our Lord and our God!" in whom all things are possible? As the father of the boy troubled by an unclean spirit cries out to Jesus in Mark's Gospel, "I believe; help my unbelief!" [Mark 9:24]. Jesus does, and that's why we're here. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.