

# Gettysburg United Methodist Church

April 15, 2020

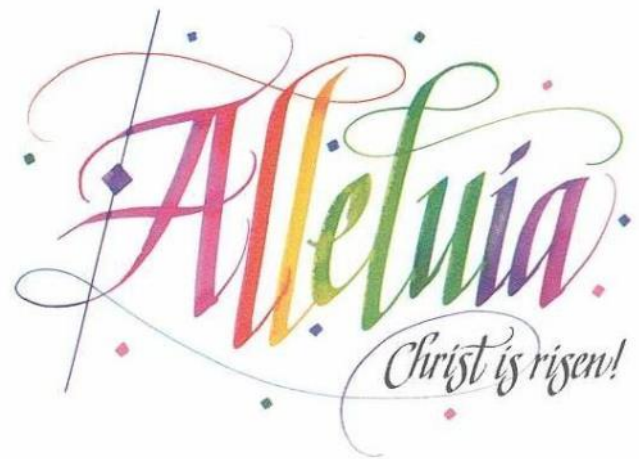
## Psalm 84

- <sup>1</sup> *How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O Lord of hosts!*
- <sup>2</sup> *My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,  
my King and my God.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise. —Selah*
- <sup>5</sup> *Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.*
- <sup>6</sup> *As they go through the valley of Baca  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.*
- <sup>7</sup> *They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.*
- <sup>8</sup> *O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;  
give ear, O God of Jacob! —Selah*
- <sup>9</sup> *Behold our shield, O God;  
look on the face of your anointed.*
- <sup>10</sup> *For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the  
house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.*
- <sup>11</sup> *For the Lord God is a sun and shield;*

*he bestows favor and honor.*

*No good thing does the Lord withhold  
from those who walk uprightly.*

<sup>12</sup> *O Lord of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.*



## Meditation

Read John 20:19-31

I've always liked 'Doubting' Thomas, even though he has a poor reputation. He's often condemned for insisting on proof of the resurrection when faith alone should have been sufficient. But I think there's much more to Thomas than meets the eye. We can learn a lot from his doubts—as well as from his faith.

Thomas first appears in Matthew 10:3, which lists the twelve apostles of Jesus. He was close to Jesus and followed him throughout his ministry. We encounter Thomas again in John 11:16. Jesus has decided to return to Judea to visit Mary and Martha, whose brother Lazarus has died. Jesus will raise Lazarus from the dead, but only by putting his own

*(Continued on page 2)*

# Do not doubt . . .

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*(Continued from page 1)*

life at risk. The Jewish leaders in Judea are seeking to kill Jesus. To return to Judea is dangerous for Jesus and for his followers. But Thomas says, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” Thomas is a man of discernment and realism, for he knows the fate that may await Jesus. But he’s also a man of courage and faith, willing to follow Jesus to the death.

Jesus appears to the disciples the evening of the day of his resurrection—but Thomas isn’t there. Thomas doesn’t see the risen Lord, and Thomas refuses to believe until he can see for himself. He wants evidence, he wants to be sure, and he isn’t afraid to be honest about his doubts.

A week later Thomas is present when Jesus appears. Jesus doesn’t condemn him for doubting. Instead, Jesus gives him a basis for faith. Jesus shows him his hands and his side, and invites him to touch him. He tells Thomas to “stop doubting and believe.” And Thomas does. He confesses his faith when he replies, “My Lord and my God!” Thomas’s confession is the climax of John’s Gospel, for John’s purpose in writing is for us to make the same confession, for us to have faith in our risen Savior as our Lord and our God.

We learn several things from Thomas. We learn that Jesus doesn’t condemn us for having doubts or lacking faith or asking questions. He knows we’re human, he knows our nature, and he knows that sometimes (maybe often) our faith is weak. Jesus doesn’t judge; he forgives and strengthens us through the Holy Spirit. There’s nothing wrong with expressing doubt or asking questions.

We learn to be honest about our doubts and our questions. God knows our thoughts before we think them, so we might as well be honest with God about what we feel. Only as we face doubts honestly can we grow in truth and grace. God is a God of truth. If we *honestly* seek truth it will lead us to Christ and his resurrection. “Then you shall know

the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (Jn. 8:32) Thomas’s honest questions led him to faith.

We learn that Jesus himself strengthens our faith. In Mark 9:14-29, Jesus heals a boy who is possessed by an evil spirit. When Jesus tells the boy’s father that “Everything is possible for one who believes,” the father replies, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” Jesus strengthens the father’s faith as he heals his son. Our faith may be smaller than a mustard seed, but it can grow into a faith that will move mountains. Jesus built up Thomas in his faith.

We live in difficult times, times when our faith is challenged. We ask difficult questions, such as “Why is this happening—did God cause it?” “Why do good people suffer?” “Where is God in all of this?” “Will God bring us through?” Sometimes people think they shouldn’t question God, but Thomas reminds us that asking questions is good—honest questions lead to truth and honest doubts strengthen our faith. God is there for us even when our faith is absent. God *will* bring us through.

—Pastor Rick



## Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, your light drives out the darkness of our lives and the darkness of our world. Enable us to be honest about our questions and our doubts.

*(Continued on page 3)*

# . . . but believe!

*(Continued from page 2)*

Strengthen our faith, that the light of your love may shine through our hearts.

May our faith come alive in service to our world. Grant us grace to love others as you have loved us, and inspire us to work for peace with justice for people everywhere.

We continue to pray your special blessing on all who suffer because of the pandemic. May they know your healing grace and hope. We also pray for those who continue to serve—for healthcare workers, first responders, police and firefighters, store clerks, delivery persons, and for all who put their lives at risk serving others.

Make us instruments of your peace and vessels of your grace; this we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

HE IS RISEN  
*alleluia*

## Updates

Worship services are suspended until the coronavirus situation permits us to resume. We hope to resume services as soon as possible. Our phone tree and website will be used to notify you when worship services begin again.

Copies of these weekly mailings are posted to the church website. We try to mail them in a timely manner, but there is no guaranteed delivery date for bulk mail.

## Easter Season

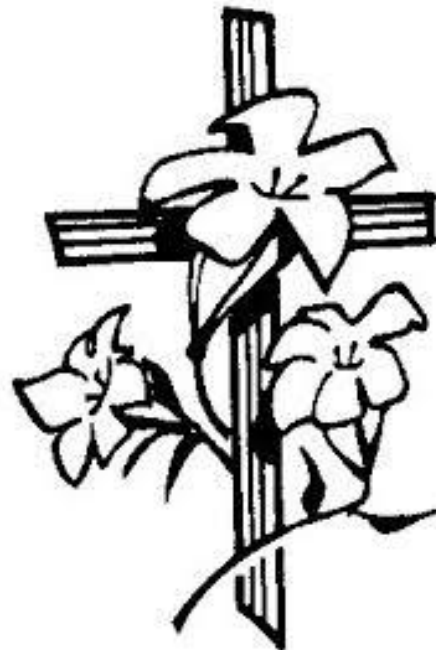
Did you know that Easter is not just one Sunday? It's a season in the church year of fifty days lasting from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. We have a whole season to celebrate the resurrection of Christ!

In a sense, every Sunday is a "little Easter", for every Sunday we remember the resurrection. That's why we worship on the first day of the week—because it's the day of the resurrection. Whenever we are able to gather again for worship it will still be Easter!

## Grocery Card Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to purchase grocery cards for families in need. We are providing grocery cards to some of our neighborhood families to help them until these difficult times are over. Cards are also available to other families in our community who face similar situations.

Donations should be designated for "Grocery Cards" and may be mailed to the church (with your regular offering) or dropped off at the church. It is especially important in these times to share God's love with our neighbors. Your help is greatly appreciated!



# HYMN

## *He Lives*

*Alfred H. Ackley*

1. I serve a risen Savior, he's in the world today;  
I know that he is living, whatever men may say.  
I see his hand of mercy, I hear his voice of cheer,  
And just the time I need him, he's always near.

### Chorus

He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along life's  
narrow way  
He lives, he lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know he lives?  
He lives within my heart.

2. In all the world around me I see his loving  
care,  
And though my heart grows weary, I never will  
despair.

I know that he is leading through all the stormy  
blast;  
The day of his appearing will come at last.

3. Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice  
and sing

Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!  
The hope of all who seek him, the help of all  
who find;

None other is so loving, so good and kind.

CCLI Song # 17597

Alfred Henry Ackley

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Alfred H. Ackley was born on January 21, 1887 in Spring Hill, PA (located about halfway between Johnstown and Altoona). He studied music in New York and later at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary and was ordained as a Presbyterian pastor in 1914, serving churches in Pennsylvania and California and working with the Billy Sunday evangelistic team. *He Lives* is the best know of the 1,500 hymns, gospel tunes, and children's songs he wrote.

Ackley wrote both the words and music for *He Lives*, which was published in 1933. It was inspired by a conversation he had with a young man who asked the question, "Why should I worship a dead Jew?" Ackley replied, "But Jesus lives! He lives! I tell you. He is not dead, but lives here and now. Jesus Christ is more alive today than ever before. I can prove it by my own experience, as well as by the testimony of countless thousands." In these difficult times, *He Lives* reminds us that we serve a risen Savior who, as our good Shepherd, walks with us through every dark valley. We see his love in the world around us, we feel his love in our hearts, and we know that he will bring us through this crisis. The hymn may be found as No. 310 in our *United Methodist Hymnal*.

We are especially grateful to all of you who have continued to send your weekly donations to GUMC during this time. Your continued generosity will help us to get through this difficult situation. Your faithful giving is deeply appreciated!

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