

*important things are happening!* God always has a purpose for shaking things up. In our text, God is shaking the disciples (and us) out of our apathy and self-focus. God is reminding us not to trust what we think we know or to rely too heavily on the temporary things of this world. Rather, God calls us to rest upon the sure foundation provided by God's steadfast promises, love, and salvation. Things that cannot be shaken. Things which are present here and now.

Thus, into the shaken world of the disciples in their locked room, Jesus appears. And I do mean, appears! He did not knock on the door and wait to be admitted. Jesus literally materializes among them. One minute he was not there, and the next minute he was standing in their midst. If you think the disciples were shaken by the events of the past three days *before* Jesus appeared, just imagine how shaken they are *now* with their dead friend standing before them. The ground that literally shook when Jesus arose, is metaphorically shaking now as he appears to his disciples. How does the mind grasp or the heart integrate or the soul respond to such earth-shaking revelations? And how will they convey this news to Thomas?

Remember, Thomas is not with the disciples when Jesus appears. When they tell him, "We have seen the Lord!" Thomas says, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Thomas' world is so shaken that he demands physical proof, he needs hard evidence that what they say is true. Thomas is the disciple often labeled the "doubter," but the other disciples were just as guilty of doubt after they heard Mary Magdalene's announcement, "I have seen the Lord!" (John 20:18); they huddled like frightened animals in a locked room.

Doubt permeates the whole scene after Jesus' crucifixion and the discovery of the empty tomb. But into this doubt, Jesus brings three things that can never be shaken: his peace, his presence, and his person.

**The Peace of Christ.** Four times in the text the disciples receive the *peace of Christ*. "Peace be with you," Jesus says. On one level, this is a conventional greeting, a basic building block of community. But the repeated mention of it here is a reminder of something that Jesus had said to his disciples earlier: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27). The peace that "the world gives" is peace that seeks to alleviate fear by relying on our own ingenuity, the security of wealth, the protection of armies, or the isolation of a locked door; but there is no peace in these things. Each will ultimately fail us. The peace Jesus offers is an eternal peace made possible by his resurrection.

The peace of Jesus is grounded in the absolute fact of his resurrection. As the risen Christ stands before the disciples with his nail-scarred hands, and feet, and side, he demonstrates to them the fact that death will not have the last word. "Because I live, you will also live," he told them earlier (John 14:19). When we forget the peace of Christ, we can be gripped by fear and doubt, and our sense of hope can easily be shaken. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection make a new future possible: an unshakeable future ready for us to move into right now through faith in him. We do not have to live in fear because we have a Savior who guarantees our future through an empty tomb.

**The Presence of Christ.** Jesus also offers us his presence. When Jesus "breathed" on the disciples, he gave them the Holy Spirit, the very *presence of Christ* in their lives (John 20:22). The Spirit would empower them to do "even greater things" than Jesus had done (John 14:12) and provide the assurance, encouragement, and peace needed to carry Christ's Gospel to the world. With his presence, Jesus stops shaking by offering us a firm foundation from which to start our ministry.

When doubt and fear creep into our lives, we can rely on the witness of the Spirit to remind us that our lives matter and have purpose in Christ. It is the Spirit that enables us to be people who forgive, who speak truth to power, who love our enemies, who bear one another's burdens, and who demonstrate the character of Christ (John 20:23). The Holy Spirit reinforces that we will never be ineffective when we are nurturing the presence of Jesus within us.

**The Person of Christ.** Our faith is not in an abstract idea: our faith is in the *person of Christ*. When Jesus shows up in person a week later, when Thomas is with the others, he invites the doubtful disciple to touch his wounds. That touch is only possible because Jesus is so much more than a concept: he is "in the flesh" like us. Jesus suffered as we suffer and experienced temptation as we are tempted. Jesus had his world shaken as ours is sometimes shaken. He dwelt among us and gave his life for us (John 1:14). Thomas conclusively believed because he saw Jesus, not just on that day, but on all the days he spent following Jesus around Judea. Thomas knew what kind of man Jesus was, a man worthy of Thomas' trust and faith, a man who never backed down from a promise even when he was nailed to a cross. Now, with the risen Christ standing in front of him in the flesh, Thomas' faith went from an abstract idea to an unshakeable reality.

Thomas' confession in the person of Christ, "My Lord and my God!" provides a foundation for our own faith (John 20:28). It is a faith that does not subscribe to the adage, "Seeing is believing," but rather the Jesus-brand of faith that "believing is seeing." Jesus continues his

mission through doubters and misfits like the disciples and Thomas and us because faith is a willingness to follow him, even when it leads us onto shaky ground. Faith is a willingness to go and do because we stand firm on Jesus who is our rock and our foundation.

The words of Psalm 16 fit nicely with the story in John 20. David wrote this psalm in a time of trouble. We don't know the trouble, but we can assume it shook his world. David asked God to save him. What's more, David knew that with God on his side, he would not be moved or shaken (Psalm 16:8), and he had confidence in some kind of resurrection (Psalm 16:10). The *tone* of this psalm is not despair or complaint because his world is shaking, but a settled joy because he knows God is greater than, stronger than, more faithful than what shakes his world. Despite his troubles, David can confidently praise God who is never shaken.

David knew God personally, "You are my Lord," (Psalm 16:2), just as Thomas knew Jesus: "My Lord, and my God!" (John 20:28). David recognizes the foolishness of relying on material things to stop the ground from shaking. He dismisses fake gods and bogus offerings. He discounts the false security that comes from a worldly inheritance and land. He knows that his future belongs with God who will bring him to "pleasant places" and in whom he has a "good inheritance" (Psalm 16:6). Therefore, "I keep my eyes always on the Lord," says David, "With [God] at my right hand, I will not be shaken" (Psalm 16:8). David is supremely confident that with God he will never be truly shaken. God is the immovable and eternal cornerstone of his life.

Jesus is that cornerstone for us. The life of the disciples was not easy after Jesus appeared. Nearly all of them faced persecution and unpleasant deaths. Life will not be easy for us either just because we follow Jesus; but whatever life throws at us, whatever tries to undermine us, whatever suffering we may endure, with Jesus we will not be shaken. With the peace of Christ, we are set on a cornerstone that cannot fail. With the presence of Christ, we are building on a foundation that will never break. With the person of Christ, we are positioned on bedrock that cannot be shaken.

Prayer: God who shakes things, I realize that being a Christian does not mean I never will have any problems in life; but I thank You that You are with me always and will provide guidance and solutions through Your Holy Spirit. Help me to build my life on the solid foundation of Your Word, and on the peace, presence, and person of Jesus Christ. With you I will never be shaken. In the name of the Risen Jesus, I pray. Amen.

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## I Will Not Be Shaken

Sunday, April 12, 2026

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Psalm 16

John 20:19-31

There are some things that need a good shaking: salad dressing, snow globes, spray paint, tambourines, orange juice, and nail polish. Oh, and martinis, according to super spy James Bond who liked his "shaken, not stirred." But bartenders say that cocktails should be stirred, not shaken. Sorry, Mr. Bond! Nor should you shake pop or champagne bottles before you open them or babies or nitro glycerine or your computer when it crashes.

We don't like it when things get shaken. When the ground moves beneath our feet, we can be badly shaken. When we're in a fender-bender, we can be "visibly shaken." When we are deeply, profoundly shocked or disturbed by something, we can be shaken to our core. When we lose trust in another person, our confidence may be shaken. When something rattles our fundamental beliefs or values, we our faith may be shaken. Being shaken can be an unpleasant experience.

John 20 describes how the disciples were shaken by the death of Jesus. It begins like this: "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders..." (John 20:19). phrase gives us the when, who, where, and why. "On the evening of that first day of the week," that is, the day of Jesus' resurrection. It's been three days since Jesus died. He is now alive, raised from the dead, but the disciples do not believe it yet. "When the disciples were together." The disciples of Jesus are gathered, all except Judas, who was dead by his own hand, and Thomas, who we learn in verse 24, was not with them for some unknown reason. "With the doors locked." The disciples are huddled together, cowering in fear, mourning their loss. "For fear of the Jewish leaders." It was the Jewish leaders who called for Jesus' death and pressured the Romans to crucify him. The disciples are afraid something similar will happen to them.

These are terrified men. This Jesus, whom they left home and family to follow, is dead. Their world is badly shaken. This Jesus, whom they believed to be the Messiah who would save his people, is buried in a tomb. Their confidence is visibly shaken. This Jesus, whom they believed would take away their sins and give them eternal life with God, is no more. Their faith is shaken to its core.

God has ways of shaking the world when God is up to something big. God literally caused the ground to quake when Jesus died on the cross and after Pentecost (Matthew 27:51-52; Acts 4:31). These were none-too-subtle messages which meant, *pay attention because*