Last Sunday we celebrated Easter which culminated Holy Week. During Holy Week we remember the last days of the life of Jesus, his painful death, and his burial in the tomb. Easter is the Sunday when we celebrate the women who arrive at the tomb three days later and find it empty and are then given instructions to go and tell others that Jesus Christ is risen.

The story that we will read next which includes an interaction between the risen Christ and the disciple named Thomas, occurs only in the gospel of John. In Luke we have a similar story, but Thomas is not mentioned in Luke’s account, only in John’s account.

This story that we will be reading is recorded by John immediately after the story of Jesus being revealed to Mary Magdalene when she is told to share the news of the empty tomb. So, let’s pick up and read one of the post-resurrection stories which are recorded in the gospels.

I will be reading from the 19th verse in chapter 20 and reading to the end of the chapter. What I will be reading will appear to end John’s account but there is also a 21st chapter to John. Most scholars assume that chapter 21 was a later addition and that the gospel originally ended with the story that we are about to read.

**Read John 20:19-31**

This past Monday was April 22nd. As we heard in the children’s message, Monday was also Earth Day. You may know that the first Earth Day was on April 22nd in 1970 and was founded by Senator Gaylord Nelson from Wisconsin.

Senator Nelson was also instrumental in numerous environmental laws that we take for granted today like the establishment of the Appalachian Trail and fuel efficiency standards for cars.

That same year that Earth Day was begun, Republican President Richard Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency or EPA and then within a couple of years President Nixon signed into law the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

I was listening to a story on the radio this week about how climate change is not addressed appropriately in school or in worship. I can’t speak to the school issue, but I can address the church issue.

Caring for the environment is central to who we are created to be by God. In the very first lines of the Bible in the book of Genesis, we read that in the beginning God creates the heavens and the earth. We read in Genesis of how God creates the light and says that the light is good.

We read in Genesis of God creating the land and the water and once again God says that this is good. We read in Genesis that God creates the vegetation for the earth and that once again God says that this is good. We then read that God creates the bugs and the birds and the fish and the animals and that once again God says that this is good.

And then we read that God creates the human beings and says that this is very good. But the human beings are given a very important responsibility. The human beings are told that they are to have dominion over the creatures and the creation that God has made. The human beings are told to be the caretakers of the world that God has made.

So, it is a clear task that we have been assigned to follow. But Christians have not all agreed on this responsibility. Unfortunately, Christians have been slow to accept and lead in our responsibility to care for the planet entrusted to our care. Why is that? To begin to answer that question I am going to invite us into the gospel story.

The gospel of John tells us of the life of Jesus. Who he is and what he does. The gospel writer shares stories of the words that Jesus says and the teachings that he teaches. The gospel writer shares the many miracles that Jesus performs.

The gospel writer then moves us into the final days of Jesus’ life on earth. The painful stories of betrayal and crucifixion and then resurrection. After the women receive word that Jesus is risen and that they have a story to tell, Jesus then appears to his disciples in a locked room.

Jesus tells them to welcome the peace which comes with knowing that the death of Jesus is not the final word, but that resurrection is. But Thomas is not with the other remaining disciples. Thomas expresses his doubts that Jesus has done what the others say they have seen.

Thomas tells them that unless he sees it for himself, he will not believe. Jesus then gives Thomas what he needs. Jesus provides the proof of placing Thomas’ hands into the side of Jesus and Thomas is able to announce that Jesus is Lord forever and that he is alive.

Like Thomas, many Christians are skeptical of the voices of scientists who tell us that the world is warming. Scientists tells us that the actions of human beings are causing greenhouse gases to be overly produced which result in heat being trapped on the earth causing the earth to warm.

Scientists tells us that this global warming is causing an increase in the intensity of storms and hurricanes and increased droughts. But many Christians doubt what these scientists tell us. Why is that?

There are three main reasons that some Christians doubt the words of scientists. The first is that many Christians misunderstand the instructions given to the human beings in the book of Genesis. Many Christians read the word translated into English as “dominion” or “subdue” as giving us permission to see the planet as a commodity that we can use however we feel like we want to use it.

But that is not what this Scripture means. The Hebrew word “rada” means caregiving and nurturing, not exploitation. Unfortunately, too many Christians have misunderstood this term to justify a literal raping of the planet.

The second reason that many Christians doubt the words of scientists is that many Christians assume that science is in opposition to the Bible. But that is a misunderstanding of what science is and what the Bible is. The Bible is not a science book.

The Bible is a collection of books inspired by God and written by human beings who share their experiences of encountering God. Through their experiences we interpret our own experiences of God. So, therefore, when scientists tell us that the creation of the world took billions of years and humans have evolved this is not a contradiction of the Bible.

The Bible tells us who created the world and why but not how. Science tells us how. The Bible tells us that God is the creator of all things, that God created the world out of love, and that God created human beings to be in relationship with one another and with God.

The third reason that many Christians doubt the words of scientists is the book of Revelation. When the Bible ends with a book which describes God creating a new heaven and a new earth and that the former things will pass away, some Christians read this to mean that we do not need to worry about the current earth. That God is going to destroy it anyway.

But that is a misreading of Revelation. Revelation is a book of the Bible that promises that God triumphs over evil in the present and in the end but that we have responsibilities to partner with God in seeking to do what is right.

So, as Christians we should embrace Earth Day. We should embrace Earth Day and adopt it as our own. We in the Christian faith should lay the foundation that Earth Day is a reminder that God is the Creator of all things. That God created human beings and assigned us the task to care for God’s creation.

To care for God’s creation on Earth day and every day.

As we affirm our responsibility as caretakers of God’s creation with our words and with our actions, we can be witnesses to God in Christ.

As we are faithful witnesses as creatures of God, many more can proclaim like Thomas that Jesus is Lord. AMEN.

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-<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/earth-day-timeline>

-Nagle, John, <https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1391&context=law_faculty_scholarship>

-Given: April 28, 2019 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)