

By Believing

John 20:19-31

April 23, 2017

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

We have been looking in the Gospel of John at encounters people had with Jesus. There was Nicodemus and Jesus; you must be born from above. There was the woman at the well and Jesus; Jesus is living water. There was the blind man and Jesus; I once was blind, but now I see. There was Lazarus and Jesus; Jesus is resurrection and life. There was Mary Magdalene and Jesus; Jesus is alive, and he names us and claims us.

Then there is what we read today. Jesus encountered his disciples...and then, later, Thomas.

Maybe some of you have heard of Ted Wachtel. He's an attorney. I mention him because of a book he wrote: **Dreaming of a New Reality**. He also has a website: buildinganewreality.com. He claims that he has spent a good deal of his life thinking about how to build a new reality. He has thought about this because he is convinced that the reality we are now in has serious shortcomings...and that throughout the world there is this widespread mistrust of our leaders and institutions and so forth. Okay...so I might agree with some of that. But "reality" and "new reality" might join "relevant" on my least-favorite-words list.

Now I usually am not one to get overly philosophical...though we all get philosophical from time to time. But whether or not we are aware of it, real and reality are important to us...more important to some than to others. We tell people whose heads are in the clouds to get real. We encourage folks who are trying to impress to be real. And being real is just

being yourself. When we are impressed with what someone has said or we maybe doubt what someone has said, We ask, "Really?" We fantasize about alternate realities.

And then there is reality television. There is reality TV all over the networks and cable. It started with Survivor. Then the floodgates opened. Amazing Race. Biggest Loser. Bachelor. Bachelorette. Big Brother. How can we survive without Keeping Up With The Kardashians? I don't want to come off as hypocritical here because I was rather fond of American Idol. And I still watch Deadliest Catch.

Yeah...real life stuff. If only I could edit my life...and bleep out some of the bad stuff...and reduce my twenty-four hour day and seven-day week down to a neat little hour-long package.

New reality. I suspect there are lots of people who would like to change what is real for them. So I'm going to suggest that Jesus introduced a brand new reality...and it is all the reality we need. Anyone looking for a change? Try Jesus.

Let's set the scene in our text...the real situation in which the disciples found themselves on the evening of that first day of the week. Remember that last week we looked at the events of the early morning of the first day. Peter and John saw the empty tomb and the evidence that perhaps Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus then appeared to Mary Magdalene.

Our text begins by letting us know it was the evening of that first day of the week. Not just any first day of the week...but that first day of the week. It was the evening of the day on which Jesus rose. Many of the disciples were