Epistle
1 John 1:1 – 2:2

We declare to you
what was from the beginning,
what we have heard,
what we have seen with our eyes,
what we have looked at
and touched with our hands,
concerning the word of life—

2 this life was revealed,
and we have seen it
and testify to it,
and declare to you
the eternal life
that was with the Father
and was revealed to us—

3 we declare to you
what we have seen and heard
so that you also
may have fellowship with us;

and truly our fellowship
is with the Father
and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 We are writing
these things
so that our joy
may be complete.

5 This is the message
we have heard from him
and proclaim to you,
that God is light
and in him
there is no darkness at all.

6 If we say
that we have fellowship with him
while we are walking in darkness,
we lie and do not do what is true;

7 but if we walk in the light
as he himself is in the light,
we have fellowship
with one another,
and the blood of Jesus his Son
cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins,
he who is faithful and just
will forgive us our sins
and cleanse us
from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned,
we make him a liar,
and his word is not in us.

My little children,
I am writing these things to you
so that you may not sin.

But if anyone does sin,
we have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous;
2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins,
and not for ours only
but also for the sins
of the whole world.

Gospel
John 20:19-31

19 When it was evening on that day,
the first day of the week,
and the doors of the house
where the disciples had met
were locked for fear of the Judeans,

Jesus came and stood among them and said,
'Peace be with you.'

20 After he said this,
he showed them his hands and his side.

Then the disciples rejoiced
when they saw the Lord.

21 Jesus said to them again,
'Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me,
so I send you.'

22 When he had said this,
he breathed on them
and said to them,
'Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive the sins of any,
they are forgiven them;
if you retain the sins of any,
they are retained.'

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin),
one of the twelve,
was not with them
when Jesus came.

25 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.'

26 A week later
his disciples were again in the house,
and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut,
Jesus came and stood among them and said,
'Peace be with you.'

27 Then he said to Thomas,
'Put your finger here and see my hands.
Reach out your hand and put it in my side.
Do not doubt but believe.'

28 Thomas answered him,
'My Lord and my God!'

29 Jesus said to him,
'Have you believed
because you have seen me?

Blessed are those
who have not seen
and yet have come to believe.'

30 Now Jesus did many other signs
in the presence of his disciples,
which are not written in this book.

31 But these are written
so that you may come to believe
that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,
and that through believing
you may have life in his name.

Reading the Epistle this Week

The lectionary offers Acts through Easter,
We'll follow the epistle reading through 1 John
a sort of general tract, or interpretive key to 4th gospel faith

The text doesn't claim to be by the author of the 4th gospel
Lots of words and ideas are revisited, but not the same way
More like somebody from the same circle of discourse,
From which we get 4th gospel, 3 letters, and Revelation

At the end of the first century,
Some person(s) wrote to some community(ies)
Without identifying themselves or their audience
About Jesus Christ, not just Jesus (gospels) or just Christ (Paul)

One risk or neighbour of a Johannine gospel is 'gnosticism'
abstracting esoteric ideas from flesh and blood incarnation,
reducing it to a 'secret decoder ring' of special knowing

Another risk or neighbour is binary exclusive 'us-them' gospel
Where we're the light, the spirit, and right
And they are dark, worldly, and wrong

Do you recognize any such distinctions or differences
In how you've heard John texts in religious talk?
Does anything in this text promise a response,
To include, inform, or help you express your faith?

I'm not preaching this week – but the rest of Easter
looking forward to how neighbours approach this –
our lay leaders are using non-lectionary texts in worship

Reading the Gospel this Week

The lectionary offers John, with Luke on Easter 3
Mark has no resurrection appearances/apparitions
(Last year, Matthew, next year, Luke)

John gave us Mary Magdalene finding the empty tomb,
On her report, Simon Peter & Beloved Disciple race to see
When they leave, Mary stays for a resurrection appearance
Then she goes to tell the other disciples

This week's text has Jesus' first apparition to the men –
In a locked room, with wounded hands and side
Offering them peace and Holy Spirit
To forgive/release or retain sins

Thomas, absent, resists their report,
Demands to touch the wounds, confirm it's the same Jesus
He gets to participate in the second closed door apparition
And the renewed offer of 'peace'
And an aphorism about seeing or not seeing, to believe

The text concludes from the narrator's point of view
Affirming many other apparitions omitted here,
Offering a criterion or purpose for including some:
Come to/continue to believe/trust Jesus is Messiah, Son of God
That through it, we come to/continue to life *zoë* in this name

Do these appearance stories in the 4th gospel do it for you?
Do you credence that Jesus is M, SoG, due to these?
Does that believing *pistis* give you life *zoë* in his name??

Why would you tell/preach resurrection appearance stories?