

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK FORTY-NINE: JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS

READING

24 One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. 25 They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.” 26 Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!” 28 “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. 29 Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.” John 20:24-29 (NLT)

TEACHING

Can you imagine how disappointed Thomas was to have missed this incredible moment? We don’t know why Thomas wasn’t with the rest of the disciples when Jesus appeared to them, but nothing could have been more important or amazing than seeing his resurrected Lord. Thomas didn’t want to settle for someone else’s story – he wanted his own. Yes, Thomas should have believed the disciples – Jesus called him “faithless” when he showed up eight days later. But Thomas isn’t the bad guy here. Thomas is just like you and me. He wanted to know that Jesus was alive and he wanted his own experience.

One of the wonderful things we learn about Jesus in this story is that he meets us where we are. Jesus appeared again when Thomas was there; he knew exactly where Thomas was at. Jesus invited Thomas to do the very things he claimed he needed to do in order to believe. Jesus invited Thomas to move from unbelief to belief and he offers the same invitation to all. There is a great blessing for those who believe without actually seeing Jesus – that’s you and me!

We haven’t seen Jesus with our physical eyes, but we know from the writings of the Scriptures and the work of the Spirit that Jesus is our Lord and God. We can study church history and world history and see real evidence for the resurrection. Every day we should give thanks for the Bible and all that it reveals about Jesus and we should ask the Spirit to tune our hearts to see Jesus with our spiritual eyes and to believe.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Can you remember a time when you doubted someone or something?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- Who didn't see Jesus the first time he was seen the disciples?
- What did Jesus say to Thomas when he showed himself again?

CHILDREN:

- What did Thomas want to do before he would believe Jesus was alive?
- What did Jesus say to Thomas when he appeared again?
- What was Thomas' reaction to seeing Jesus?

TEENAGERS:

- What did Thomas want to do before he would believe Jesus was alive?
- Describe the interaction between Thomas and Jesus.
- What do we learn in this story about belief?

ADULTS:

- How is your faith grounded in the Scriptures?
- How has the Spirit assured your heart of the truth of the resurrected Jesus?

PRAYER

God, I admit that I am often like Thomas. Your Word says one thing, but I believe another thing. I forget that you are in control. I forget that you are good. I forget that I can trust you with my life and my heart. Forgive my forgetfulness and my unbelief. Help me believe. Thank you that you have given me your word and your Spirit to help ground my faith both in what can be known and what can be experienced. Help me to lead others to experience life-changing belief in your son. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

There are eight days between Jesus' first two appearances to his disciples after the resurrection. It's interesting to note that there are three key similarities in both appearances:

- 1) The disciples were together. They hadn't pulled away from each other in this dark difficult time, they had stayed united. This was an answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17.
- 2) The doors were locked. They probably were still afraid of what the Jewish leaders and Roman authorities might do to them. They weren't exactly bold world conquerors...yet.
- 3) Jesus said, "Peace be with you." He knew that they might be startled by his sudden appearance, so he offered a word of peace. Wherever Jesus shows up – peace is there. So it was also a statement of fact – I am with you and I am peace. Thank God for his perfect peace!