

April 27, 2014

Lesson 28: Thomas



John 20:19-31

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 Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

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

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

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

Thomas

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The Big Story Truth: Jesus gives what is needed for faith.

About This Scripture Passage: This scripture passage recounts two different days and appearances of Jesus and how these appearances lead to the gift of faith. In the first appearance, Jesus shows up to a group of disciples gathered together in a locked room. They are fearful, but Jesus shows up with the gift of peace. They rejoice at the sight of him. They are able to believe (finally) the words of Mary who had already seen Jesus risen. Jesus breaths on them and in that breath of new life gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit. But reading a little further, we find out that one of the disciples wasn't there that night. Thomas was absent. Thomas, like the other disciples, can't believe the good news without seeing Jesus for himself. And so Jesus gives what Thomas needs in order to believe. Jesus shows up in person to Thomas and shows him his wounds.

Jesus provides the physical sight and touch that Thomas needs. The scripture passage acknowledges that we too need help in order to believe the good news. In fact, that is the reason we are given for the Gospel of John having been written in the first place.

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Making the Connection: This story raises the question... what do we need in order to be able to believe the Good News of Jesus? Is it hearing these Gospel stories? Is it experiencing the love and care of a church community who will patiently learn with us about God's love? Is it the gift of the Holy Spirit given to us in baptism? When we study the Apostle's Creed, Luther's explanation to the third article says, "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." If the point of John's Gospel is to reveal Jesus so that we can be brought to faith, than we can see ourselves in this passage too. Those who are given joy and blessing in believing without seeing are us. Those for whom this Gospel and all its stories are written are us. How cool it is to be able to show our children that they have a part in this story. This was written for them! May the Holy Spirit reveal that to us and to our classes today!

Where in the World Are We?

They are in a house, most likely in Jerusalem, but it we don't know which house.

For Your Reflection:

What is needed in order for you to believe? What's already been given? Is there anything still missing?

What do your kids need in order to believe? How might God work through you to provide that?



