

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Second Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 20:19-31

“I have seen the Lord!” exclaimed Mary Magdalene. At first she does not recognize who is standing beside her. When she realizes it is the risen Jesus she wants to grasp him. He holds her off and tells her to go and share what has happened: He has walked through death and has created a path for us to follow, now and on through our own death.

In these 50 days of Easter, celebrating what Jesus has done for us, we are invited to recognize Jesus standing beside us, as he did with Mary. What is he calling us to do? Perhaps we can train our eyes to look in the direction that this Jesus, standing beside us is looking. What might he be looking at? Do we dare follow where he is leading? Can we notice and honor the various ways Jesus “appears” to people?

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

“Are we next?” In fear the disciples huddled behind closed doors. As they pray, Jesus is right there with them, empowering and commissioning them. Jesus honors Thomas’ need for authentication. At the same time, Jesus reaches out to us across the millennia: “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe.”

Theme: Believing in Order to See

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible or copies of today’s scripture and copies of the Book of Common Prayer.

Beginning: The world has sold all the Easter candy at half-price and is on to the next commercial event. We are just beginning the Easter Season that will last until we celebrate Pentecost. We can be thinking about how we will choose to be Easter People, being, for many people, the only Gospel they will ever know.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of the Risen Christ and your assurance of life everlasting. Amen.

Option: Tell the group that since we have not been together since Palm Sunday, we can think back to events that have brought us to this day in the cycle. Tell them that you will name a service we have had in this church and leave a silence for people to offer a word, a phrase, or a feeling about the event. Here are some options (use the ones that pertain for your community):

- **Maundy Thursday** (when Jesus shows his disciples how to be together in the breaking of the bread.)
- **Good Friday** (when Jesus’ non-violent acceptance of the violence invoked on him shows the futility of violence.)
- **Easter Vigil** (when the light of Christ pierces the darkness.)
- **Easter** (we respond to the Resurrection of Jesus with candles, flowers and beauty.)
- **Easter Season** (we are now in our second week remembering that we are Easter People.)

The Scripture: John 20:19-31 Invite four people to read the following sections: vs. 19-23, vs. 24-25, vs. 26-29, and vs. 30-31.

Questions:

- I wonder why the disciples were huddled in fear behind locked doors? (They had no assurance that the death that had been ordered for Jesus would not also be ordered for them.)
- How has this passage misled some people into anti-Semitism? (It was leaders of the Jews who agreed to have Jesus killed. Some people have gone from this specific to a generalized prejudice against all Jewish people.)
- I wonder why Jesus greeted the disciples with “Peace be with you?” (“Shalom” which is what this means, would have been the normal greeting Jesus would have offered his disciples. Perhaps he used this phrase to assure the disciples that he was truly Jesus.)
- How else did Jesus assure them that it was he? (Verse 20)
- Why do we think he needed to do all this to be sure they recognized him? (The Resurrected Jesus appeared different enough that even Mary Magdalene did not recognize him.)
- What does Jesus commission his disciples to do in verses 21-23? (Go. Sent as Jesus was sent. Receive the Holy Spirit. Forgive sins.)

Option: Since not everyone understands why we pass the peace in our service, your group could discuss why we do this. Ask people to turn to page 360 of the Book of Common Prayer.

- Where does the passing of the peace occur in the service? (Right after the confession of sins and the absolution by a priest.)
- What are we doing as we shake hands or hug people around us? (Perhaps the person we really needed to forgive lives miles away, we shake the hand of the person near us and let that person stand in for the forgiveness we are offering. Then we return the favor by standing-in for the person they need to forgive.)

Suggest we sit for a moment and think of someone we need to forgive. After a moment of silence we can greet each other shaking hands and saying, “The peace of the Lord be always with you.” “And also with you.”

More Questions: (if you have time)

- Looking at the second half of today’s story, what do we make of Thomas’ reaction in verse 25b? (The phrase “Doubting Thomas” trivializes the authentication Thomas required.)
- How does Jesus honor Thomas’s need? (verse 27)
- How does Jesus honor our own journey into faith? (verse 29)
- How does Jesus describe how he expects we will reach believing (vs. 29 and 31)? (Notice the words recorded in both verses “come to believe” implying that we grow into our faith.)

Getting Closure: Ask the group what resources we have right here in our midst to continue to come to believe? How can we help each other? How can we reach out to any who might have shown up in our community for the first time this Easter? What do we need to be thinking about as we show up in our world as the only gospel many people will ever see?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that just as you did not leave the disciples alone but sent the Holy Spirit, that you send the Holy Spirit into our lives also, right here, now. Amen.

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 Jews, 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.

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