

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Second Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**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:** If there were no classes on Easter, it is especially important to be sure children have noticed the transition between Jesus who died on the cross and Jesus resurrected. If you did not have class last week, read the suggestion for a worship space which will be used all through the Easter Season and bring these materials to class. Think about how many children you are likely to have so there is something for each child to place on the table.

Make the activity fit your setting: if the children are regularly in church during the Eucharist and participate in the passing of the peace, you can play church with the activity and skip the explanation. If they are not regularly in church or you suspect they are a bit bewildered about the passing of the peace, use the explanation.

Bring supplies for decorating the cloth. You will need dark construction paper cut into quarters, table sugar, water, a small container for those two ingredients, and Q-tips or small brushes.

**Beginning:** Invite the children to tell you about Easter. What happens on Easter? (They will probably tell you about chocolate bunnies, jelly beans, etc.) We have fun food when we are happy. Do you know what we are happy about? Jesus, who died, did not stay dead. That is what we are happy about.

Let’s set up our worship space, putting the cloth on the table (or box) and then placing all the things we have on the table. Light the candle, and make sure to blow it out after the story.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, for this Easter Season when we celebrate that Jesus did not stay dead and was resurrected. Amen.

**The Story:** Jesus' friends went to their house. Their house had a big room where they could all be together. They did not know what to do next, so they held hands and prayed together. While they were praying, Jesus came into their circle and said to them: "Peace be with you." Jesus showed his friends the places on his body where he had been hurt. Then Jesus said again: "Peace be with you." Then he said, "Okay, guys, God sent me to show you how to do things. Now I want you to go out and tell other people that God loves all of us." Jesus breathed on all of them so the Holy Spirit would be with them to help them do what Jesus asked them to do. (Blow out the candle.)

**Activity:** In our church, every Sunday, people remember what Jesus told his friend to do. So they say, "Peace be with you" as they shake hands or hug people around them. So, let's pretend we are in church and stand and shake hands with every other person in this room and say, "Peace be with you," as we do.

**Activity:** If you did not meet last week, tell the children that the white cloth on the worship space will be decorated during the Easter Season with drawings we make. Today we can draw pictures that make us think of Easter. If the children have not used sugar water to paint with, show them how to dip the Q-tips in the sugar-water and draw what they want. Tell the children we will need to let the drawings dry and pin them on the cloth next week. We can make two drawings each, if we want, one to pin on the cloth and another to take home with us next week when the pictures are dry.

**Getting Closure:** Let the children tell you about their drawings.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, that Jesus gave us your peace. Amen.

(Pass the peace with each other before you all leave.)

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Second Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

**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.

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**Theme: Believing in Order to See**

**Before Class:** If you met with this group last week, you may want to skip the first beginning activity. The first option honors the fact that the children you are working with are mostly thinking very concretely and want to know, “Is it true?” You will need either Bibles or copies of today’s passage.

**Beginning: (recap of Holy Week and Easter)** Did anyone here attend any of the services we had at our church for Holy Week? If so, what can you tell us about them? What parts were hard to understand? If you were trying to describe them to a classmate who is not a member of this church, how would you describe the services? What were we getting ready to celebrate on Easter?

**Beginning:** Tell the children that there are many things you know are true, but you cannot explain how they work. (Offer something that is true for you. For example, how WiFi works, how voices come through your telephone, how oxygen makes its way through our bodies, etc.) Ask the children to offer some things they know are true, but cannot explain.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, for the gift of life and for life that goes on forever. Amen.

**The Story: 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 huddling behind locked doors, “in fear of the Jews?” (The disciples were also Jewish but the “Jews” they feared were those few leaders who had agreed to the crucifixion of Jesus.)
- I wonder why Jesus greeted the disciples by saying “Peace be with you?” (Perhaps since that was the way he had always greeted them, they would know he was Jesus.)
- What did Jesus do to let the disciples see for themselves that he was really Jesus? (verse 20)
- Why would they have NOT recognized Jesus? (Evidently he looked different. In last week’s lesson, Mary Magdalene did not recognize him at first, in stories to come we will see others who did not recognize him right away.)
- Why was breathing on the disciples so important? (In their language the same word is used for breath and for spirit and even for wind. Look at Genesis 1:2)
- What does Jesus say that receiving the Holy Spirit prepares the disciples to do? (verse 23)

**Option:** Ask the children if anyone knows why we stop our service in the middle and walk around shaking hands. The explanation: The service has just offered people the opportunity bid one another the Peace. It is a time to ask God for forgiveness and at the same time to forgive people who have hurt us. The person we want to forgive, or ask for forgiveness, may not even be in the room, so we stand in for each other, shake each other’s hands, and say, “Peace be with you.” Suggest we sit in silence for a minute, remember something we need to ask God to forgive, and then stand and shake hands with each member of our group, saying, “Peace be with you.”

**More Questions:**

- Looking at the last part of our story, how does Jesus help Thomas to believe? (Verse 27)
- What does Jesus say about us who were not there? (Verse 29b)
- What else does Jesus tell us in verse 31 that he understands about how we believe? (We come to believe, which means we have our whole lives to continue growing in our belief.)

**Activity:** Divide the class in half in some arbitrary fashion. If the group is too small to divide, you participate in one of the halves. Tell one of the groups they are the disciples. The other group is reporters trying to understand what is happening. Give both groups a little time to plan either how they will respond to the reporters, or what questions they will ask as the reporters. Then let them begin the interviews. If time permits, have the groups switch roles so the ones that had been disciples are now reporters and visa versa.

**Getting Closure:** Ask the children who played disciples to tell how it felt to be interviewed. Then ask the reporters how it felt to ask the questions.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, that you love us and know we need time to grow into our faith. 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.’<sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’<sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.’<sup>27</sup> 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.’<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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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**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.

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**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**

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