

## Second Sunday of Easter

John 20:19-31

As John wrote his story of the Resurrection many years after the event, it was as though he were experiencing the moment all over again. John had been there at the foot of the cross. From the cross Jesus had asked him to care for His mother, Mary. John, in short, is telling a story that he witnessed himself. He had seen the risen Christ. He, Mathew, and Mark have left us first person accounts. There is no reason to doubt their stories.

John's words virtually carry us to the room where Jesus suddenly appeared after His resurrection. The beginning of verse 27, for instance, says in the original language, "Then He is saying to Thomas..." John takes us into his mind, where he can still hear Thomas say, "My Lord and my God."

Thomas was no more doubtful than the other apostles had been. Remember that when the women came running to the men with the news of Jesus' resurrection, they did not at first believe them. Peter ran all the way back to the tomb to see if the women could possibly be right. The two disciples of Jesus, who were walking to Emmaus and met the Savior, had no idea that He might leave the tomb in which He had been placed. It took a personal experience for them to understand the truth.

Thomas had not been present when Jesus appeared to the other apostles. Their story probably not only confused him but frightened him. Can you imagine seeing a man die, a spear thrust into His body on the cross to prove His death; seeing Him put into the tomb; and then be told that He had returned from the dead?

Thomas gets a bad rap from many Christians, but did he doubt more than you or I would have? We have the New Testament first-person accounts, none of which had been written when Thomas came face to face with the risen Christ.

Jesus says that He will return in the clouds. That everyone will know what is happening. Perhaps part of the reason that He is going to do this is that if He didn't return in the clouds, you and I would say, "I will not believe it until I see it."

**Have you invited a friend to attend a regular Bible study with you?**

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Second Sunday of Easter

John 20:19-31

1. When does this account take place (vs. 19-23)? What had happen earlier in the day? What was significant about Jesus' second visit to the disciples?
2. What's significant about Jesus' greeting "Peace be with you" What does Easter have to do with the peace that Jesus gives? When do we hear these words in the worship service?
3. Why is Thomas sometimes called "doubting Thomas"? Have you ever had doubts about Jesus presence and power? How does God answer our doubts?

### For Family Reflection

4. The disciples were behind locked door because they were afraid (vs. 19). What are some of the things that we are afraid of? How does knowing about a risen Jesus help us in our fear?
5. Have there been times in your heart or home where things have not been peaceful? What does Jesus saying "Peace be with you," do to our relationships with Him and with each other?
6. Review the "Office of the Keys and Confession" section in Luther's Small Catechism. Where do we find vss. 22-23? Who forgives our sins? How can we forgive others?

## Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-19

What were the disciples doing out on the Lake of Galilee fishing? Why weren't they in Jerusalem getting Jesus' Church started? Why weren't they busy telling everyone about Jesus?

There were seven followers of Christ there that day. They had all been through a life-altering experience not too long before. They had seen Jesus, their Teacher and Leader for three years, arrested, tried, hung on a cross, and then resurrected. Like us, they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. He was their Savior. He had guaranteed their relationship with God for eternity. They understood that, just as we do. So, why were they fishing instead of preaching the gospel?

Just as we feel sometimes, the disciples weren't too sure of anything except Jesus' love for them. They had seen Him in the upper room after His resurrection and witnessed Thomas' doubt and reassurance. Life was beginning to calm down and make sense again. Perhaps Jesus would soon establish His kingdom and restore Israel to its rightful place in God's world. That would be glorious! That was about as far as their own vision would take them.

Jesus, however, had other plans, and He came to the shore of the lake to let them know that their lives in Him were only just beginning. His vision went far beyond anything that they thought they could do. In the coming years, these fishermen, and others, by the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, spread the gospel throughout the known world.

How is your vision for God's kingdom? Though most of us aren't pastors or professional church workers, we too have a part in God's vision for His world, but we don't realize what it might be. We know that Jesus loves us as we go about with our "fishing" each day. We look forward to an eternity with Him, but there is more. Jesus still invites us to sit on the shore with Him and hear about His vision concerning our place and our work in His kingdom. Don't be surprised if His will for you is beyond what you have ever envisioned on your own.

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## Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-19

1. What's the significance of Jesus' appearances after His resurrection? (See also 1 Corinthians 15:3-8) Who were the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection in this text?
2. What was Peter's reaction to the miraculous catch of fish? Who is "the other disciple" (vs. 8)?
3. What did Jesus ask Peter in vs. 15-17? How many times did He question Peter's love? Is there any significance to the three questions and three answers?
4. What prophecy does Jesus share with Peter in vs. 18? Using a Bible dictionary or commentary explore the fulfillment of this prophecy.

### For Family Reflection

5. If Jesus were to ask you "Do you love me?" what would be your answer? How can we show our love for Jesus?
6. Jesus says to us also "Follow me" (vs. 19). What does it mean for us to follow Jesus? When is it difficult to follow Jesus? What assurances do we have as we follow Him?

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

John 10:22-30

“Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe.’” (vs.25) Jesus’ teachings and His Person were and are unique in history. All other religions are man-imagined and none offers the world a God who loves His creation enough to die in its behalf and then give the costly salvation accomplished in this death to mankind with no strings attached. There are no works to be done by men in order to gain God’s favor. There are no frailty-filled gods who argue over man’s fate. There is no barrier between people and God. There is only a Bridge who has made us God’s own people.

Those who challenged Jesus to “...tell us plainly” had already chosen not to believe because Jesus did not fit their idea of what God must be like. The same problem continues today.

Jesus chose to become true man, one of us. He did this, not just to condemn our behavior, but to invite us into a full understanding of who He is. That understanding could have meant our destruction. In the presence of God, our sin would mean eternal death for us all. But Jesus did not condemn us. He offered Himself as the sacrifice for our failures. His free gift to us is eternal and abundant life in His presence. Only Jesus offers the world this God-created solution to sin. Only the religion known as Christianity is based on God’s power instead of man’s power.

Out of His great love for the world, and only through Himself, Jesus offers mankind an intensely personal relationship with God. How personal is this relationship for each of us, man or woman, child or adult, pastor or layperson? Jesus’ words tell it best:

“My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”

**Get to know your Father. Join a Bible study group.**

(A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee)

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

John 10:22-30

1. According to vs. 26, how do we become part of Jesus’ flock? When did you first become one of His flock? Did He choose you or did you choose Him?
2. According to vs. 28 what are the blessings of being part of Jesus’ flock? Do we have to worry about losing our place in His flock? How does God keep us securely and faithfully in His flock?
3. How do we demonstrate to our heavenly Father and to others that we are part of His flock? (vs. 27)
4. How did Jesus demonstrate to the audience of His day (and ours) that He truly was the Christ? (vs. 25). What proof do we have that Jesus is truly our risen Lord?

### For Family Discussion

5. It’s “Good Shepherd” Sunday. Read the first part of John chapter 10. How did Jesus show that He is the Good Shepherd? (vs. 15) Can you find a picture of the Good Shepherd in your church or home?
6. Sing or read “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb” (LSB#740). Why are you happy that you’re His lamb? Who else needs to know about our Shepherd Jesus?

## Easter Sunday

Luke 24:1-12

This ancient story of the Resurrection has troubled intellectual unbelievers and even some theologians. The Resurrection can be a stumbling block to many who investigate our faith. It's just too supernatural. Some overcome this problem of a dead man rising from the grave by ignoring it or by believing that Jesus' resurrection was only spiritual—that His body stayed in the tomb. Some even say that the Resurrection was a story created by early Christians in an effort to confirm the new religion. Others claim that Jesus only fainted on the cross and revived in the coolness of the tomb. Some insist that it doesn't matter if you believe that Jesus really had a bodily resurrection. It really isn't a big deal. You can be a good Christian without it. To believe that it doesn't matter is to believe a lie. Christianity is irrelevant to the human condition without the Resurrection as described by the eyewitnesses of the event.

St. Paul said that if Jesus was not raised from the dead, "...your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." Without the bodily resurrection of Christ, Christianity becomes a mere philosophy of conduct, with no salvation, no eternal kingdom, no hope.

The Resurrection was God's stamp of approval on everything that Jesus did and said. It was God's stamp of approval on Jesus' claims that He was Messiah, the Son of Man, and the Son of God.

Jesus claimed that He would rise from the dead on the third day after being executed by His enemies. If He did not rise from the dead, then everything else that He said becomes a lie. Without the Resurrection, Jesus of Nazareth was a liar who fell into a trap from which he could not escape, or a madman who thought he was God, or both.

If we share the love of Christ without the Resurrection, we share only an empty story, instead of the empty tomb that is the proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord of all.

**He is risen! He is risen, indeed!**

**Let God's Word bless you in a special way this Easter season.**

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Easter Sunday

Luke 24:1-12

1. Who are the "they" that went to the tomb on Easter morning (see vs. 10 and 23:49,55)? What was the purpose of their early morning visit?
2. Who were the "two men" (vs. 4)? What was unusual about their appearance? What was their message?
3. Were the women surprised by what they saw and heard? Should they have been surprised? In what ways should we never be surprised about the message of God's Word?
4. Why did the women's message seem like "an idle tale" (vs. 11)? Are there people still today who don't believe the Easter message? What do we tell them?

### For Family Reflection

5. What surprises you about the Easter story? What surprises does God have planned for us because Jesus is risen from the dead?
6. Read the Easter story again in Luke or one of the other Gospels (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, John 20:1-10). Sing a favorite Easter song and offer a prayer of praise and thanksgiving that Jesus is risen from the dead for you and your family!