

## **Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

### **Title: Believing Is Seeing**

### **Lesson: John 20:19-31**

*<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, 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 side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." <sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples 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 nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." <sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." <sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." <sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

The Second Sunday of Easter is also known as Holy Humor Sunday. It's a day for us to rejoice in the resurrection of Christ. So, I've brought along some humor I found on the internet.

1. A Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest were good friends. At a picnic one day, the priest was eating a ham sandwich. "You know," he said to his friend, "this ham sandwich is delicious. I know you're not supposed to eat ham, but I don't understand why such a good thing would be forbidden. When will you break down and try it?" To which the rabbi replied, "At your wedding."

2. By the time Bobby arrived, the football game had already started. "Why are you so late?" asked his friend. "I couldn't decide between going to church and going to the football game. So I tossed a coin," said Bobby. "But that shouldn't have taken too long," said the friend. "Well, I had to toss it 35 times."

3. A mother went to wake her son for church one Sunday morning. When she knocked on his door, he said, "I'm not going!" "Why not?" asked his mother. "I'll give you two good reasons," he said. "One, they don't like me. Two, I don't like them." His mother replied, "I'll give you two good reasons why YOU WILL go to church. One, you're 47 years old. Two, you're the pastor!"

4. A new pastor was visiting the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. Therefore, he took out a business card that had printed "Revelation 3:20" on the back of it for just such an occasion, and stuck it in the door. When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned.

Added to it was this cryptic message, "Genesis 3:10." Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Genesis 3:10 reads, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked."

During the Season of Easter, we proclaim our slogan: "Christ is risen!"  
"Christ is risen indeed!"

**(Slide 1)** Christ has indeed risen, just as He prophesied, three days after His crucifixion. Initially, Jesus appeared to His disciple Mary. Though Mary did not immediately recognize Him, when Jesus called her name, her eyes and ears were opened, and she soon realized that Jesus had risen, transforming all her sorrow and worry into joy. She then went to inform the other disciples that Jesus had indeed risen.

The disciples had heard the news from Mary that Jesus had risen, but they could not believe it because they had never seen someone who had died come back to life. They might have thought Mary had seen an illusion. So, they were gathered together in one house, trapped in fear of not knowing when they might face death just like Jesus. Therefore, they locked all the doors of the house.

**(Slide 2)** However, at that moment, Jesus came to them and said, "Peace be with you." Then, He showed them His hands and side. Only then did the

disciples truly believe that Jesus had risen and that Mary had indeed seen Him. It was only after meeting the risen Jesus that they fully understood that death is not the end of life, and what resurrection truly means, and what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

Having experienced resurrection through Jesus Christ, they were no longer afraid of death. Instead, all their fears, anxieties, and worries were transformed into joy, expectation, and hope.

Unfortunately, one of the twelve disciples, Thomas, was not with them at that time. The Bible does not explain why he was not with the other disciples at that time. What is certain is that he was spending time elsewhere. Considering that it was shortly after Jesus' death, he seems to have been dealing with Jesus' death and his loss in a different way from the other disciples.

When Thomas later approached the other disciples, he heard from them that Jesus had risen. However, he could not believe their testimony because he had personally seen and heard about Jesus' death. To believe that Jesus had risen, he needed concrete evidence. He truly wanted to see and meet the risen Jesus for himself, so he doubted and questioned the words of others.

We often refer to Thomas, who demanded tangible evidence to believe in the resurrected Jesus, as "doubting Thomas." But if we were in Thomas's shoes, would our reaction have been any different?

**(Slide 3)** Doubt can sometimes be necessary on the journey of faith. Doubt can even become an opportunity for faith because when doubts are resolved, they can lead to strong belief. Therefore, curiosity and doubt become prerequisites for spiritual growth. Recognizing this, Jesus did not rebuke or condemn Thomas. Instead, Jesus showed him His hands and side. He even allowed Thomas to touch His side with his own hands.

Through Jesus' gracious invitation, Thomas fully recognized who Jesus was and matured in his belief that Jesus had indeed risen.

Sometimes people say, "Seeing is believing." This means that what we see, hear, and experience is everything in this world. So, when people want to

believe something, they often ask for evidence to believe it. Thomas did, the disciples did, and Mary did. This is our way.

**(Slide 4)** However, Jesus spoke differently: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29) Through these words, Jesus teaches us that believing is seeing. This means that we actually come to know the truth through faith. Faith is necessary to see and understand the truth.

So, in the journey of faith, it is natural to gain new perspectives through belief. When we have faith, we can experience the resurrection of Jesus. When we have faith, we can discover truths that were unseen before. Therefore, we gain new insights within faith. Jesus' words demonstrate that by believing, we can truly embrace God's plans and purposes.

To conclude today's message, I would like to turn to Hebrews chapter 11:

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. <sup>2</sup> This is what the ancients were commended for.

<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

<sup>4</sup> By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

<sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.