

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER - APRIL 19

Describe a time when someone really listened to you and helped you figure out what you really needed when you were scared or upset about something.

Note: If you are with a group, have each person take a turn sharing.

Scripture Reading: 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."

Reflection

In today's scripture, Jesus visits the disciples after he's been raised from the dead. For those brief moments, it must have been a joyous time when Jesus came back to be with them. Maybe even a bit comforting in a very troubling time. But it wasn't for Thomas because he wasn't there. He didn't experience what the others experienced.

The disciples were living in a very scary time. Their friend had died, and now their lives might be at risk because of their association with Jesus. They locked themselves up in a house and felt unsafe. They needed assurance; they needed to know what they were putting their lives at risk for was worth it.

We don't know where Thomas was and why he missed seeing Jesus. Did he go out to get some groceries? Perhaps he volunteered to pick up some essential supplies to use until it was safe to go out again. When Thomas returned, his friends told him all about how Jesus had visited them.

Imagine how Thomas must have felt. His life was at risk by being away from this safe house, and the very moment he comes back to safety, they tell him Jesus showed up. Jesus is alive! But Thomas couldn't believe it; nope, not unless he saw Jesus for himself.

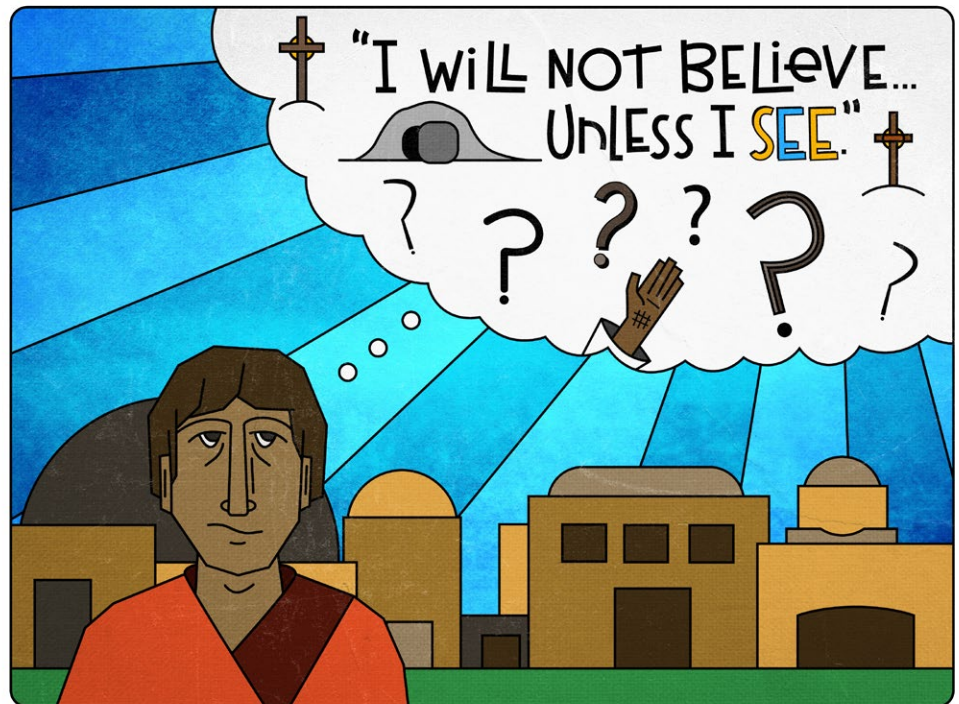
At first glance, it is tempting to dismiss Thomas for not believing. But then, we know the rest of the story.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples a second time, a week later, Thomas was there. Jesus didn't mind that Thomas had a hard time believing what his friends told him. Instead of getting irritated with Thomas, Jesus gently shows him the scars on his hands. Thomas needed this assurance. Jesus knew Thomas's disbelief came from a place of pain and grief, and maybe even an attempt to protect the little bit of hope Thomas had left.

Sometimes, when we feel frightened or upset, or even incredibly happy, how we respond to something might not fully explain all the feelings and concerns we are holding onto at that moment. When someone says something that seems a bit unbelievable or doesn't make sense, it can be easy to dismiss them.

Thomas needed to see Jesus' wounds, and Jesus gave Thomas what Thomas needed. In doing so, Jesus honored Thomas's many feelings, worries, and fears.

We are all still living with uncertainty and fears due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We can show love and kindness to each other by paying extra attention to the people around us, listening carefully, and honoring the feelings about what we're going through together.



John 20:19-31 • illustratedministry.com

Discussion Questions

1. What do you imagine Thomas felt when his friends told him Jesus appeared to them when he wasn't there?
2. When have you had some big feelings? Did you have a hard time, at the moment, sharing what you needed? What did you realize later that you needed and who helped you feel better?
3. Jesus was kind to Thomas and assured him that his feelings were okay. What kinds of things do you need when you have big feelings, like being frustrated, upset, or sad?

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for this story about Jesus, Thomas, and the disciples. Help us show kindness and love to one another, especially when big feelings arise. Give us the strength to say what we need. **Amen.**

✝ "I WILL NOT BELIEVE...
UNLESS I SEE." ✝

