

First Sunday after the Resurrection/ Communion Sunday

Lectionary Title 19: **Encountering the Doubters and the Fearful**

Old Testament: Joshua 1:9 (NRSV, 1989)

⁹I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'

New Testament: Mark 16:4-8 (NRSV, 1989)

⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

John 20:24-29 (NRSV, 1989)

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So 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.' ²⁶A 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.' ²⁷Then 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.' ²⁸Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

General Concept: The risen Messiah manifests himself to the doubting and fearful disciples. Experiencing the Risen Lord removes our doubts and fears.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **Jesus appears before his disciples.**

ME/O: **Jesus appears before his doubting and fearful disciples.**

Y: **Jesus' appearance removes the doubts and fears of the disciples.**

A: **Experiencing the Risen Lord removes our doubts and fears.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Joshua succeeded Moses in the task of leading the Israelites to the promised land. It took forty years for the first generation of Israelites to reach the vicinity of the River Jordan where the promised land was already within reach. After forty years, some Israelites might have already lost hope, got tired, grew impatient and became discouraged and doubtful waiting for the time when they can enter and inherit the promised land. But God assured Joshua that God will be with him and with the people as they enter and occupy the land where they will establish an alternative community of God's chosen people, an alternative to what they have experienced and suffered for so long in Egypt.

In the resurrection account of the Gospel of Luke, women visited the tomb of Jesus when the Sabbath was over. They went there to bring spices. But they were surprised that the large stone at the entrance of the tomb was already rolled away and Jesus' body was no longer there. Instead, they saw two men in dazzling clothes who told them that Jesus has risen from the dead. The men instructed the women to tell Jesus' disciples. So they told the eleven and all the rest what they have experienced.

In the Gospel of John, after Jesus had risen he appeared first to Mary Magdalene who stood outside the tomb crying because she thought Jesus' body was stolen. When Mary Magdalene experienced the Risen Lord, Jesus removed her fears and she received assurance and comfort. Thomas, on the other hand, who was not around when Jesus appeared to his disciples doubted the news. Thomas insisted that only upon seeing the nail marks of Jesus will he believe in the story that he indeed was risen. After a week, the disciples were gathered in a house when Jesus appeared and confronted the unbelieving Thomas and told him to put his fingers on the nail marks so that he would stop doubting. Jesus went on to tell Thomas and his disciples that those who believed even if they have not seen are even more blessed.

In the Gospel of Mark, the resurrection passage highlights the name of Peter. The young man dressed in white robe specified to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome to inform Peter and the other disciples that Jesus has risen. Peter who earlier affirmed that Jesus is the Messiah, and through whom Jesus promised to build his church, is also the one who denied him three times later on. The mention of Peter's name in connection to the resurrection of Jesus can be understood as a preparation for Peter's restoration from a person who doubted and feared towards a person becoming one who is a courageous and loyal witness to the resurrection of his master and Lord. He now becomes a source of hope for acceptance and forgiveness to those similarly fearful and weak of heart and who may have also the tendency to deny Christ in crucial moments. They can be assured that they can and will also experience the presence of the Risen Lord in their lives.

Indeed, the encounter with the Risen Lord has given Christ's followers the courage, assurance and motivation to stand firm and defend their faith that Jesus is the Messiah. Their encounter with the resurrected Jesus has given them the understanding, focus and direction to continue the work as mandated by Jesus. And in times of their doubts and fears, the Risen Lord appears to them in many ways and in various occasions to remove their unbelief and fear. In the same manner that whenever Christians succumb to doubts and fears in their ministry and service which can lead them astray and make them confused and discouraged, Jesus would appear through the equipping of the Holy Spirit to give us new direction, focus and determination allowing us to confront and press on with challenging the powers and authority that prevents the establishment of God's kingdom. The resurrection of Jesus is Christianity's source of hope for power to realize and experience the new life and the completely new reality that the risen Lord now bestows to all those who would remain steadfast and loyal in their faith and witness to his truth and liberating love even up to the end.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

For Christians, Jesus' resurrection is the indispensable anchor of faith. This is also the main stumbling block that keeps others from becoming or remaining Christian. The resurrection episode depicting Thomas' reluctance to recognize the risen Jesus exemplifies the challenge that believers face then and now. Our rational faculties tell us to verify the truthfulness of any claim from empirical evidence. If there is nothing empirical to support such claim, either it is rejected or the rational processes are suspended in order to allow the mind to accept the claim. Faith-claims, however, don't need the consent of reason because faith, particularly faith in the risen Jesus, originates from experience prior to the operation of the intellect. Thomas touching Jesus' wounds is a metaphor of an experience with the risen Lord.

The question is what sort of experience can mediate a faith-experience? Those who require a mystical kind of experience would shut out others who are not given to any shade of mysticism. But Christ is Lord and Savior not just of the mystically inclined but also of those whose perception of reality is that of a secular modern world. A secular kind of Christianity (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) would show the utter hospitality and inclusive reach of the Christian faith.

For other believers whose faith is ethically oriented, experience with the risen Jesus is truly and effectively mediated through a faithful following of Jesus' ethical stance. They take Jesus' challenge to carry their own crosses to the extent that the powers who dominate people's lives are challenged and unmasked for what they truly are.

Many others devote themselves to building up the church from the inside. They carry the burden of nurturing young members in the ways of Jesus as a counterforce to the corrupting influence of a decadent environment. Some of them encounter Jesus in the care for the sick, the shut-in, the despairing and confused, and many more according to the diversity of gifts poured out by the Spirit to the church.

In short, it is by immersing in the life and work of Jesus through the church and in the larger society that believers may find a living Lord and Savior.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. continue to describe that Jesus is alive by appearing to his doubting and fearful disciples;
2. realize that when we are afraid, we can trust Jesus because he is alive, and
3. express one's thanks to God for making Jesus live.

II. Concept: Jesus appears before his disciples.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart, crayons

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly as they arrive.
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you that you are source of our life. The life you give us allows us to move and become better children of our parents. Guide us in our Sunday school today. We pray this in the name of Jesus the way, the truth and the life. Amen.
3. Tell the children to sing some greeting songs together with "Alive" and "This is the Day" joyfully.

B. Getting Ready

1. Recall the resurrection story by assisting the class to do the Cross Fingerprint Craft. Prepare at least two paper plates of different colors of paints using dye. Provide each child with an activity sheet. Tell them to dip their fingers on the paint and print the cross. Remind them to be creative and to put away the materials after they finish working.
2. Encourage the children to say that Jesus is no longer on the cross because he is alive.

C. Learning Time

1. Prepare the children to listen to the story by letting them do a finger play.
2. Provide each child activity sheets. Invite the children to listen carefully to the story.

Peace Be With You!

(Based on Mark 16:4-8 and John 20:24-29)

The women see the tomb open. They become afraid. One asks, "Who rolled the stone?"

As they enter the tomb, they see a young man dressed in a white robe. Still afraid, they hear him say, "Do not be afraid. Jesus has been raised. He is alive. Go, tell the disciples of Jesus that he will go there before you."

They hurriedly leave the tomb to tell Peter and the other disciples.

When Jesus visits the disciples, Thomas is not there. The other disciples tell him about Jesus who is alive.

Thomas says, "I won't believe easily! I need proof. I want to see the mark of the nails on Jesus' hands first before I believe. O wait, of course the wound on his side, I want to put my hand on it."

A week later, Jesus visits again and this time Thomas is with the other disciples. Jesus greets them joyfully, "Peace be with you."

Looking at Thomas, Jesus continues, "Please put your finger here on the nail marks of my hand and your hand in my side also. Do you believe now?"

Thomas nervously exclaims, "My Lord and my God!"

Tapping Thomas' shoulder, Jesus declares, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe. Peace with you my dear Thomas!"

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the children the following questions:

1. Was Thomas around when Jesus first appeared before the disciples? (No. He was not around.)
2. What was the reaction of Thomas when his fellow disciples told him they saw Jesus? (He doubted and wanted to see the mark of the nails on Jesus' hands. He wanted to put his hand on Jesus' side.)
3. What did Thomas say when he realized the Jesus is really alive?
4. How did Jesus treat Thomas when Thomas believed in Jesus?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Did the appearance of Jesus to the disciples remove the fear and doubt of the disciples?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the biblical verse in John 20:29b: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."
2. Let the children greet each other saying, "Peace be with you." Allow them to roam around until everybody has greeted everybody. Emphasize that when they greet each other "Peace be with you," it means Jesus is with them and takes care of them always.
3. For YE: Tell the class to unscramble the letters in the activity sheet and write the sentence.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the children to recite in unison the memory verse, "Peace be with you." (John 20:26b)
2. Offering of Thanksgiving: Each one says, "Thank you God that Jesus is alive. We believe he is alive and we can live in peace!" and puts his/her offering in the basket.
3. Closing song: "With Christ in My Vessel"
With Christ in my vessel, I can smile at the storm,
Smile at the storm, smile at the storm.
With Christ in my vessel I can smile at the storm, until he brings me home.
Sailing, I am sailing home (twice)
With Christ in my vessel I can smile at the storm, until he brings me home.
4. Closing Prayer: "Dear God, we believe Jesus is alive. Thank you for living with us, giving us peace when we are afraid, and protecting us always. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. retell the story of Jesus' resurrection when he appears to his fearful and doubting disciples;
2. realize that people can look to Jesus' resurrection in times of fear and distress;
3. express one's thanks to God for the hope brought about by Jesus' resurrection, and
4. demonstrate one's joy as Jesus is raised from the dead

II. Concept: Jesus appears before his doubting and fearful disciples.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), activity sheet, crayons

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you that you are a source of our life. The life you give allows us to move and become better children of our parents and fellows to others. Guide us in our Sunday school today. We pray this in the name of Jesus the way, the truth and the life. Amen.
3. Tell the children to sing some greeting songs together with "Alive" and "This is the Day" joyfully.

B. Getting Ready

Divide the class into six groups and assign each group any one of the following events. Tell each group to read the verses in each box that tell about the event. Then ask them to draw their thoughts in the blank space using the given references.

1. The Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-28)
2. At the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39)
3. The Betrayal of Judas (Matthew 26:14-15)
4. The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:2, 3, 7)
5. The Burial of Jesus (Matthew 27:66)
6. The Empty Tomb (Matthew 29:5-6)

C. Learning Time

1. Ask the class to read the New Testament texts (Mark 16:4-8 and John 20:24-29) silently.
2. Discuss the story by reading aloud the parts under each key sentence. Ask the class to share their insights related to the story under each key sentence.
 - a. The women who visited the tomb of Jesus found its door open.
 - b. A young man informed the women that Jesus is alive and told them to tell the disciples about it.
 - c. That evening Jesus appeared to His disciples while they were locked in the upper room together.
 - d. Thomas was not with them. They told him about it but Thomas did not believe them
 - d. After a week, Jesus visited the disciples again and greeted them, "Peace be with you!"
 - e. Jesus showed Thomas his hands and side.

- f. Thomas recognized Jesus.
- g. Jesus made a comment about faith.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss the lesson. Allow a free-willing sharing of answers to the following questions:
 - a. How did the women and Thomas react after hearing the news of Jesus' resurrection?
 - b. How did Jesus react to the doubt of Thomas?
 - c. Have you ever been afraid? What was it that made you afraid?
 - d. Have you ever been doubtful to somebody? What was it that made you doubtful?
2. Divide the class into two groups. Tell the first group to prepare a short pantomime based on Mark 16:4-8 and the second group based on John 20:24-29.
3. Express appreciation of the children's presentation.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How did Jesus' appearance to his disciples remove their fear and doubt?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." (John 20:26b)
2. Introduce the game "Trust Walk". Have everyone find a partner. Tell the partners they will take turns playing as guide or guided. Without holding the hand of the guided child (blindfolded), the guide will tell him/her on what to do through an obstacle course (chairs, boxes, etc.). After a round, tell each group to exchange roles.
3. Discuss the activity. Ask the following questions:
 - a. For the guided: Were you successful in going through the obstacle even when blindfolded? Why or why not? What helped you in being successful?
 - b. For the guide: How did you feel when the guided partner was successful in going through the obstacle? What do you think helped you in making the guided trust you?
 - c. What important lesson does this activity teach us in relation to our Bible readings?
4. Ask the class about the things that they can do when they are afraid or in doubt. (Expect different answers. One of these can be: We can look to Jesus and trust him in times of fear and distress.)

G. Closing Worship

1. Lead children to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering: As the class finish their offering, have them say together this thanksgiving prayer: "Caring God, thank you for the hope brought about by Jesus' resurrection."
3. Closing song: "Celebrate, Jesus, Celebrate"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we believe Jesus' resurrection removes our fears and doubts away. Once again we say thank you for your abiding and caring love even as we show others our utmost care. Now we leave this place to live lives of trust in you. Amen."

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe the details of Jesus' appearance to his fearful and doubting disciples;
2. explain the significance of Jesus' appearance to his fearful and doubting disciples;
3. relate the command of Joshua to be strong in the Lord with Jesus' resurrection, and
4. express one's thanks to God for making Jesus alive to give us hope of eternal life.

II. Concept: Jesus' appearance removes the doubts and fears of the disciples.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, activity sheet, song sheet, notebook and pen

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, we come today mindful of your abiding presence in our midst through the Holy Spirit who casts our fears and doubts away. Teach us once again your ways so that we may continue to become better persons and channels of your love and justice, so that the world may know and feel that you are alive in us. This we pray in Christ' name. Amen.
3. Opening song: "He Lives" (HFJ # 164)

B. Getting Ready

Form two groups. Tell each group to do a mural using an art medium of their choice. Have each group refer to the following biblical references to recall the events before, during and after Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. Have them label their artwork. If possible, ask them to invite other Sunday schoolers to view their work.

1. Matthew 26:26-28
2. Matthew 26:39
3. Matthew 26:14-15
4. Matthew 27:2, 3, 7
5. Matthew 27:66
6. Matthew 29:5-6

C. Learning Time

1. Instruct the class to read the biblical references silently. After the silent reading, form dyads. Tell each dyad to describe the details of Jesus' appearance to his fearful and doubting disciples using the given questions under each reference. Discuss the answers of the dyads before the big group.
 - a. Mark 16:4-8
 - 1) What do you think happened to the stone covering the tomb?
 - 2) Why was the tomb empty?
 - 3) Who informed the women about what happened to Jesus?
 - 4) Why did the young man tell the women to go to the disciples?
 - 5) What will Jesus do to the disciples?
 - 6) What does the Markan text tell you about the character of Jesus' disciples?
 - b. John 20:24-29
 - 1) Who visited the disciples?
 - 2) Who missed meeting with Jesus?

- 3) Why do you think Thomas did not believe the story of the disciples about Jesus?
 - 4) What does the Johannine text tell you about Thomas' character?
 - 5) When Jesus came to visit again after a week, what happened to Jesus and Thomas?
 - 6) What does Jesus' response to Thomas tell you about Jesus' desire for His disciples?
 - 7) What lesson on faith did Jesus teach the disciples?
 - 8) Like Thomas, can we believe, too? Why or why not?
2. Tell the class to read Joshua 1:9 in unison and ask them to relate the exhortation of Joshua to the Israelites and to how the disciples should feel regarding Jesus' resurrection.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Prepare the class to play the trust game "The Walk of Faith". Make groups of three players and have them stand in line. All the middle players will be blindfolded and the other two players will stand in front and at the back of the middle player. Tell the two players to guide the middle player to run though an obstacle by instructing him/her on the turns and footsteps without holding his/her hand. When the third player runs successfully through the obstacle again without blindfolds, the team wins. If not, another player is blindfolded and runs through the obstacle again. This time, the obstacle is changed.
2. Discuss the game. Ask the class about the importance of one's trust in God and having supportive friends that will help in making good choices. Let them relate this activity in their youth ministry in the church.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How can we, as followers of Jesus, overcome our fears and doubts?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Engage the students to enumerate the doubts and fears in their lives they want removed and how they think these will be removed.

Doubts and Fears Go Away	
Doubts/Fears	How?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

2. Say: "Overcoming fears and doubts is something we decide to do with Jesus. He can remove our fears and doubts if we ask by believing that He is willing and able to do so. We can trust him to fulfill his promise of eternal life for there is nothing we can do apart from Him."

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Each one joyfully says, "Thank you loving God fthat Jesus is alive to give us hope of eternal life" and puts his/her offering into the basket.
2. Closing song: "He Lives" (HFJ # 164)
3. Closing prayer: "We believe you are alive and you go with us daily in our lives. Your resurrection, O Lord Jesus, removes our fears and doubts away. Thank you once again for your abiding and caring love even as we show others our utmost care. We now leave this place to live lives of trust in you. Amen."

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. summarize the details of Jesus' appearance to his fearful and doubting disciples;
2. look back to Joshua's command to be strong in the Lord as a prelude to Jesus' resurrection;
3. conclude that Jesus' appearance is a solid proof of God's providence in times of fear and doubt not only to the disciples but to all believers, and
4. express one's thanks to God for making Jesus alive to give us hope of eternal life.

II. Concept: Experiencing the Risen Lord removes our doubts and fears.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, activity sheet

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome and handshake time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we come today mindful of your abiding presence among us through the Holy Spirit who removes our fears and doubts away. Teach us once again your ways so that we may continue to become better persons and channels of your love and justice; that the world may know and feel that you are alive in us. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen.
3. Opening song: "He Lives" (HFJ # 164)

B. Getting Ready

Let the adults share their experience related to the celebration of the Holy week and during the Resurrection Sunday.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read the biblical references and guide them in the discussion.
 - a. Mark 16:4-8. Point out that the story tells of the fearful reaction of the women after hearing that Jesus rose from the dead. The same fear and even terror restricted the women from saying anything to anyone. Discuss the following points:
 - 1) There is a possibility of persecution due to association with a crucified man.
 - 2) There is a potential for mockery since women were considered unreliable witnesses.
 - 3) The act of spreading the news about the resurrection of Jesus by women carries an unprecedented character for women.
 - 4) The effect on Mark's listeners to go and tell the stories of Jesus' resurrection and its relation to the possibility of taking up one's own cross is evident even though being publicly identified with Jesus was potentially dangerous.
 - b. Instruct the class to also silently read John 20:24-29. Ask one or two volunteers to tell in summary form what the story is all about. Discuss the following points:
 - 1) The effect of Thomas' remarks probably led Jesus to prove himself to Thomas ordering him to put his fingers on the nail marks on Jesus' hand and also his hand in Jesus' side.
 - 2) As a response, Thomas affirms Jesus Lordship and Divinity exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus says to Thomas that those who believe even without seeing are blessed.

2. Ask the class to relate what Joshua said (Joshua 1:9) to how we believers should react to the news of Jesus being victorious over death.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the following questions:

1. Which of the following reasons do you agree with the most as to why the women did not tell anyone about the message of Jesus' resurrection? Justify your choice.
 - a. possibility of persecution and ostracism
 - b. self-preservation
 - c. natural reaction
2. What can you say about Thomas' reaction?
3. What can you say about what Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29?
4. In what ways can we encounter today the resurrected Jesus in our life as individuals and as a church? Give examples.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How does the experience of the risen Lord remove our doubts and fears?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Collect reaction by saying, "I agree" or "I disagree" on the statement: *Jesus' appearance is a solid proof of God's providence in times of fear and doubt not only to the disciples but to all believers.*
2. Present this table to the class and have them answer it orally. Tell them to identify the place (home, church, community) where they can do these practical steps in removing fears and doubts. Group all who agree, and have those who disagree also form another group. Have them talk about their group's answer.

Doubts and Fears Go Away	
Doubts/Fears	How?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Each one joyfully says, "Thank you loving God, for making Jesus alive and for giving us hope of eternal life" and puts his/her offering to the basket.
2. Closing song: "He Lives" (HFJ # 164)
3. Closing prayer: Each learner says a thanksgiving prayer to express one's thanks to God for making Jesus alive and for giving us hope of eternal life.