

SCRIPTURE READING FOR APRIL 24, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

John 20:19-31
COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

¹⁹ It was still the first day of the week. [The same day that Mary had gone to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty.] That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "**PEACE BE WITH YOU.**" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples *saw* the Lord, they were filled with joy. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "**PEACE BE WITH YOU.** As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." ²² Then he *breathed* on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ *If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven.*"

²⁴ Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn't with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, "We've *seen* the Lord!"

But he replied, "Unless I *see* the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't BELIEVE."

²⁶ After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, "**PEACE BE WITH YOU.**" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. *Look* at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. BELIEVE!"

²⁸ Thomas responded to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus replied, "Do you BELIEVE because you *see* me? Blessed are those who don't *see* and yet BELIEVE."

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The gospel of John one of the four stories of the good news of Jesus (Gospel means good news) which tells his life, actions, words, and mission. It's believed that John's account is the last one written as his retelling of the story reflects considerable theological reflection and uses metaphors and poetic language. All four gospel writers tell the same story, but emphasize particular things, and tell the story from different points of view – perhaps because they had different intended audiences to whom they were writing.

In John there are two stories of encountering Jesus after his resurrection – both on a Sunday.

In Matthew 28:16-20 Jesus orders his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you."

In Mark 16:8 the women who've discovered the empty tomb are "overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."

In Luke 24 after appearing to the twelve disciples Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus who only recognize him after they were at table and "he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" – echoing the words of the last supper communion meal (Luke 24:30)

proposed readings, we're focusing on the passion story (of the crucifixion) of Jesus in John. Each text we'll consider focuses on a particular person. Here we see Pilate – the Roman governor of Palestine – who is a conversation partner with Jesus about his vision and teaching.

PEACE BE WITH YOU :: Shalom (or Peace) is the standard greeting among Jewish Hebrew-speaking people of this time. Notice the repetition.

Breathed | Spirit :: In both Greek (pneumos) and Hebrew (ruach) mean Spirit, ghost, wind and breath. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the Spirit of God is given only to Kings, prophets and judges. This is radically new – as everyday – struggling to believe folks receive the Spirit of God. This is the same verb used in Genesis 2:7 "then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. "– the implication is that the disciples are here made into a new creation.

³⁰ Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. ³¹ But these things are written so that you will BELIEVE that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that BELIEVING, you will have life in his name.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- What does it mean that the disciples could see and touch the wounds of Jesus?
- We often think of this story as being about the opposition between seeing and touching. But in fact the main contrast is between seeing and coming to faith. How does that speak to you?
- The word BELIEVE (πιστεύω in the text) means "to believe, as in have confidence in...or be persuaded in... It also means to have faith in, and to put one's trust in." What relationship do you see between seeing – BELIEVING – and having life?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Notice the repetition and word play with the words BELIEVE and *see*. They reinforce the closing editorial comment of the gospel writer in John 20:29 that tells us as we read the gospel, and haven't seen Jesus with our own eyes during the past, that we are blessed to believe in a way that the original disciples were not.

This word play continues and points back to the introductory statement in John 1 on faith in Jesus.

¹⁰ The Word was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who BELIEVED in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

If you forgive anyone's sins..., they are forgiven :: This statement points back to and echoes the words of Jesus in John 17:18 "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." The implication is that the disciples have the same authority and mission as Jesus.