

SCRIPTURE READING FOR EASTER SUNDAY - APRIL 16, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

John is the fourth of the four gospels in the Second Testament. The gospels are the telling of the story of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings. John is most likely the last of the four to be written down as it contains a more developed theological content, and heavy use of metaphor. During Lent we've read several stories told only by John, including: the story of the blind man who see and the seeing who are blind and the woman at the well who is seen only by Jesus for who she truly is, not by everyone in her town.

This theme of seeing, or sight, or vision is key throughout the gospel of John. The empty tomb story of Mary discovering Jesus alive, is punctuated by the word "**to see.**" Today's text immediately follows that story, repeating and expanding upon the theme of faith and sight.

It echoes and in conversation with other key parts of John's telling of Jesus (*more on this on the back of this sheet*).

Peace be with you:: this is the traditional greeting in Hebrew – Shalom. Here it seems even more poignant as the disciples are hiding out in fear

breathed :: remember that the word for SPIRIT (ruach | רוח) in Hebrew; and (pneuma | πνεῦμα) in Greek means simultaneously Spirit, Breath, Ghost, Wind. John tells of the giving of the Holy Spirit in words that echo the creation of humankind in the second Creation story of Genesis: "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." - Genesis 2:7. *The giving of the Spirit of God is for John a second, or new, creation.*

the Twin :: Δίδυμος [Didymus] which literally means "twin" – a possible nick-name. The Greek name equivalent to Thomas.

BELIEVE:: πιστεύω pronounced pisteuó means both to "believe," "to have faith in," and also "to trust" - either from persuasion, observation, or experience - and it has the connotation of belief that leads to, or proceeds from, God's in-birthing of faith.

John 20:19-31

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹⁹ When it was evening on the [day that Mary saw Jesus alive], the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "*Peace be with you.*" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they **saw** the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "*Peace be with you.* As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he *breathed* on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ 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."

²⁶ 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.*" ²⁷ 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." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ 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."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to BELIEVE that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through BELIEVING you may have life in his name.

Here are a few helps as you wrestle with the text in the larger context of John's telling of the gospel:

1. Notice the repetition of seeing, believing. Remember that last week's text John 20:1-18 hinged on the statements of Mary - to the garden "Have you seen where they took him?" Then her eyes were opened and she saw him. Her to the disciples "I have seen the Lord."

2. Remember the repetition of this theme throughout the gospel, in particular quite a few of the stories that we read during Lent:

**THOMAS ALSO APPEARS IN
JOHN 14:1-7**

(THE ONLY OTHER TIME)

[Jesus said]

¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. BELIEVE in God; BELIEVE also in me. ² In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ **THOMAS** said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

**JESUS HEALING THE
BLIND MAN**

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven the man born blind out (of the community), and when he found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have **seen** him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I BELIEVE.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may **see** and those who do see may become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We **see,**’ your sin remains.”

John 9:35-41

**JESUS ENCOUNTERING
THE WOMAN AT THE
WELL. HE'S THE ONLY
ONE THAT "SEES" HERE.**

²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ “Come and **see** a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”

³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city BELIEVED in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.

⁴¹ And many more BELIEVED because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we BELIEVE, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

John 4:28-29, 39-42

**JOHN STARTS AND ENDS
WITH SUCH STATEMENTS.**

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was 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 the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

John 1:1, 14-18

²⁹ 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.”

John 20:29

²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ But there are also many other things that Jesus did;...

John 21:24-25

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- John alone includes this story about Thomas. Why?
- What does seeing have to do with believing, and believing have to do with seeing? What is John saying about faith to those - like us - who didn't live and see Jesus during their lifetimes, but rather encounter Jesus through the testimonies in scripture?
- 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?