

Rotation 7, 2007 - 2008
Easter through the Eyes of Thomas
3 weeks – March 2, 9, 16, 2008
No Sunday School on Easter, March 23, 2008

Yearly Theme: Faith in Christ for a New Day

The disciple Thomas knew that Jesus was arrested and killed on a cross. Thomas knew that his Master was dead and Thomas was devastated. Was their hope for a Messiah in vain? So when his 10 friends said they had seen Jesus alive, he could not believe them. Just like his 10 friends, Thomas wanted to see for himself! Jesus honored that desire and came to Thomas one week later. Jesus held out his wounded hands and invited Thomas to touch and feel for himself that Jesus was alive and real! Thomas' disbelief turned to belief, and Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" Thomas' words became the creed of all Christians. We are Easter people! Faced with death and living with questions, we believe in a Savior who has conquered death. *Dear Lord, change our disbelief into belief. Give us faith to love and trust you, our living Lord and God. Amen.*

Scripture References: John 20

Memory Verse: Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me." John 20:29

Learning Goals: The children will learn:

1. Jesus died and was buried on a Friday afternoon, but he rose from the dead on Sunday morning.
2. When Jesus rose from the dead he had a transformed body – it was real, with wounds that could be seen and touched, and could eat. Jesus' body was also spirit – it could walk through walls and appear and disappear.
3. Jesus' disciples did not believe the women's story that Jesus had risen from the dead, but believed when Jesus appeared to them on Sunday evening.
4. Thomas was not with the other 10 disciples, so he did not see the risen Jesus, and did not believe the disciples when they told him that they had seen Jesus alive. But when Thomas saw the risen Jesus for himself, he believed Jesus was Lord and God.
5. Jesus said that people who have not seen him and still believe are blessed – that includes us! Faith in Jesus does not come from physical sight. Faith believes when we do not see; it is a gift from God.
6. Living with faith does not mean to always be sure and have no questions. Living with faith means living with love and trust along side our questions.
7. FIFTH GRADERS – will be involved with their prayer partners during this time. They will learn to pray for others and grow in empathy for others. They will also feel a greater sense of belonging to this congregation.

Life Application:

1. Jesus died and rose from the dead. He is my Savior!
2. Sometimes I have lots of questions about God. My questions are part of my faith.
3. God blesses me with faith so that I believe Jesus is my Lord and my God.
4. Jesus' resurrection gives me great hope because I know that death is not the end of life. I will live with Jesus forever.
5. I am greatly blessed because I know that Jesus is my Lord and God!

Rotation Overview:

Activity	Room	Description	Teacher 8:45/10:15
Craft	Room 7	Make a wooden hand of belief	Deb Wheeler / Kaarl Nasvik
Video	Youth Room	View NEST video "He is Risen"	S & G Nelson / Greta Bahrke
Music / Move	Gym	God Rods to the song, "Arise My Love"	Shelley Rice / Kris Bowditch
Movement	Room 6	Stations of the Cross	Doris Linnerooth / Guy Becker
Music	Patio Room	Handbells	Anne-Marie Hendrickson / Sharon Skogen

Background:

Jesus walked around Palestine for 3 years, teaching and preaching about the Kingdom of God, and healing those who came to him. But the religious leaders viewed Jesus as a blasphemer (he made claims that only God could make) and saw Jesus as a danger to the Jewish people. They feared the Roman oppressors would crush the Jewish people if Jesus' followers began to speak of a new King. So the Jews arrested Jesus and sentenced him to death on false charges. Then they brought Jesus to the Roman governor Pilate, who was pressured to crucify Jesus. Jesus willingly accepted death on a cross, he died and was buried. But on Sunday morning, Jesus' tomb was empty and Jesus was alive – risen with a transformed body that could be touched and appear and disappear. Jesus appeared to the women who had come to his tomb, but the disciples refused to believe their news. It wasn't until Sunday evening that Jesus appeared to 10 of his disciples, that they believed. But Thomas was not present, and he could not believe what the other 10 told him. He needed what the other 10 disciples had received, a personal encounter with Jesus. One week later Jesus appeared to all 11 disciples - Judas the betrayer was not with them because he had committed suicide. Jesus showed Thomas the wounds in his hands, and Thomas believed, speaking the Christian testimony for all times, "My Lord and my God!" It was a New Day for Thomas and for the world! Nothing would ever be the same!

The Gospel of John is the only Gospel that tells us this story of Thomas. In fact, John gives us the only other information we know about Thomas. Thomas was also called Didymus, which means "twin." In our previous lesson we studied Jesus' visit to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. After Jesus and his disciples left Lazarus' home and traveled across the Jordan River, they received a message that Lazarus was very ill. Jesus delayed two days, and then said it was time to return to Judea. The disciples objected to this plan since just a short time earlier the Jews in Judea had tried to stone Jesus. But when it became apparent that Jesus was determined to return to Judea, Thomas told the other disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Thomas was loyal and courageous. He loved Jesus to the death!

Later, after Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples, he began to tell them some very important things. Among those teachings Jesus told his disciples that he would leave to prepare a place for them. Jesus said, "You know the way to the place where I am going." But Thomas was honest and answered, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus responded to Thomas with the wonderful words, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

Finally, after Jesus' resurrection, Thomas is mentioned as one of the disciples who joined Peter on a late night fishing trip, where they caught nothing. Jesus appeared on the shore and shouted to them to cast their nets on the other side. The disciples recognized their Lord and Jesus prepared breakfast for them on the beach. Jesus gave Peter a kind of commission that night – feed my sheep! Shortly after this, Jesus ascended into heaven and Jesus' disciples, equipped by the Holy Spirit, began to spread the word of their risen Lord and God. Tradition says that Thomas traveled to India with the Gospel, and was martyred there. Indian Christians trace their faith back to the testimony of Thomas.

There is an unfortunate predicament with this Easter story of Jesus showing himself to Thomas. Most people refer to this story as the story of “Doubting Thomas.” In fact, many Bible translations have translated Jesus’ words to Thomas in John 20:27 as, “Stop doubting and believe.” Many Christians read this story and feel terrible guilt at any sign of doubt in their faith – questions or yearnings to understand more than they know. Doubt has come to be seen as a weakness and a sin. Thomas is looked down upon, and nobody wants to be seen as a “doubting Thomas.” But this is very unfortunate because the Scripture text does, in fact, not say “stop doubting and believe.” Jesus says, “stop being the unbelieving one and be the believing one.” Thomas simply did not believe Jesus was alive, just like the other 10 disciples did not believe it when the women told them. His reaction is no different than the other disciples! Jesus does not come in rebuke, but comes so that he too may see and believe. Then Jesus speaks a great benediction for the benefit of everyone who will not see the risen Lord. Jesus says, “blessed are,” the same words used in the Beatitudes found in Matthew. Oh, how happy! How happy are the people who have not seen and still believe!

John’s gospel is all about belief. The word “believe” is found 98 times in John, and only 30 times total in all the other gospels. Look at how John ends the story of Thomas:

“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

The evangelist wants all his readers to believe – even though we do not see. And John is very clear – to see Jesus does not mean that you believe in him. Remember the story of Jesus healing the man born blind, found in John 9, which we studied last year? The religious leaders saw Jesus with their eyes but they did not believe in him. The man born blind had not seen Jesus but believed. Physical sight did not guarantee belief. The same is true today. People can see miracles of all kinds, but it does not guarantee that people believe God has done a wondrous thing! Belief in God opens eyes to see God at work, and not necessarily the other way around. We might look at Thomas and say, “Oh that lucky Thomas who was privileged to see Jesus. It wasn’t difficult for him to believe!” But Jesus claims, “Oh how happy (lucky) are those who do not see me and yet believe!”

We end with Thomas’ confession, “My Lord and my God.” It is the Christian creed – Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and Jesus gives life to those who believe. Thomas’ confession brings us right back to John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Thomas confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, crucified and buried, and now risen to life. And Jesus brings the gift of life to all who believe in his name. What then of doubt? Doubt and questions are part of belief; we live with doubt and questions, and yet we believe. How can this be? Belief, or faith, is a gift from God. What we cannot understand with our logical and reasonable minds, we accept with our hearts. God’s Spirit resides in our hearts and keeps us in Christ Jesus. Then we hear Jesus’ voice, just as Thomas did, “Stop being the unbelieving one and be the believing one.” Come with your doubts and your uncertainties and your questions and put your love and trust in me, and I will give you peace, the peace that passes all understanding. It is God’s promise to Thomas and to you and me. Praise be to God!

Multiple Intelligence Check List

	Verbal / Ling	Logic/ Math	Spatial/ Visual	Bodily/kin	Musical	Interpersl	Intraper sl	Naturalist
Craft	x		x	x			x	x
Video	x		x		x		x	
Movement to Music	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Story / Walk	x	x	x	x			x	x
Music Bells	x	x		x	x	x	x	x

Rotation 7, 2007- 8: Easter through the Eyes of Thomas

Workshop	March 2	March 9	March 16
Room 7 – Wooden Hand Craft	4	3	5
Youth Room - Video	2	5 Prayer Partner Coffee	1
Gym – Music and Movement	5	4	3
Room 6 – Stations of the Cross	1	2	4
Patio Room – Handbell Music	3	1	2