

Interactive lesson



picture from [https://
pathways.org/watch/parents-
guide-to-stages-of-peek-a-boo/](https://pathways.org/watch/parents-guide-to-stages-of-peek-a-boo/)

What are they doing? <Let them respond>

Do you know why peek-a-boo is important for children?
<Let them respond; clarify it is for cognitive
development of object permanence>

When Jesus rose from the dead, did He appear and just
stick around? <Let them respond>

Why do you think Jesus did all those different
appearances instead of just living among the
disciples as before? <Let them respond>

How does knowing that Jesus appeared unexpectedly, in
different situations, affect how you live?
<Let them respond>

May you encounter God in your life in enough ways for
you to understand the permanence of His love for you.

Gospel lesson

Last week the empty tomb was discovered, and the
disciples (as usual) were confused. This week we hear
how Jesus clarified events for them once again.



picture screencaptured from
<https://www.bible.com/videos/25568-jesus-appears-to-his-disciples>

John 20:19-31 (NRSV)

¹⁹ 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."

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, which are not written in this book.

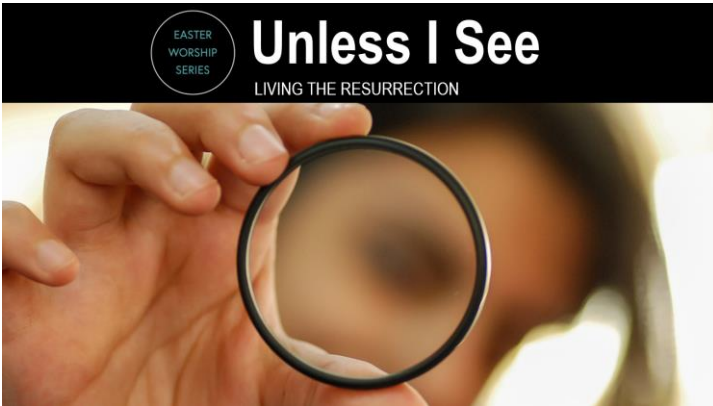
³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "O Sons and Daughters, Let Us Sing"

UMH #317 vv.4,6,7,8,9>

Message: Unless I see



picture adapted from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/living-the-resurrection/second-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Almighty God beyond our comprehension, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

that we may see You more clearly, love You more dearly, and thus follow You more nearly. Amen.



Living the Resurrection



- ♥ April 4 – Terror & Amazement
- ♥ **April 11 – Unless I See**
- ♥ April 18 – Touch and See
- ♥ April 25 – Listen to My Voice
- ♥ May 2 – Abide in Me
- ♥ May 9 – No Greater Love
- ♥ May 16 – We Are Yours

This week's summary states:

“On the Sunday after Easter, there is a general let down. It is hard to maintain the heights that we attain on the celebration of Resurrection Day...

Even in this still uncertain time of pandemic, there might be a tendency to relax a little bit on this week. Resist that tendency!”

Today’s Gospel is often referred to as the story of doubting Thomas, but I think it should more rightly be called the story of the doubting disciples. Did you notice how, after finding the tomb empty and being told by women that Jesus was alive, by evening the disciples had locked themselves in a safe house?

Like an infant that just lost sight of her parent, the disciples were fear-filled and wondering what they should do. And just as a returning parent reassures the child, Jesus reassured the disciples. He spoke to them, He let them see it really was Him, and He breathed on them.

These days, reading that, I had different reaction than in previous years, as this cartoon portrays:

HE **BREATHED** ON THEM?
IS THAT EVEN **SAFE**?



WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

IT IS... IF IT'S
THE **BREATH OF GOD!**

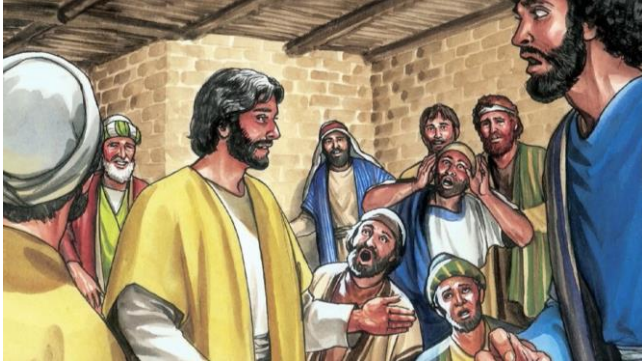


JOHN 20:19-31

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<https://www.agnusday.org/comics/901/john-20-19-31-2020>

To breathe on someone, you have to be pretty close to them. There was no mistaking the identity of who just showed up.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-104-appearance-thomas/>

Jesus told them to “Receive the Holy Spirit” on Easter – fifty (50) days before Pentecost! And yet the tongues of flame did not land on them in that instant. Why was that?

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus talks about the need for faith; the success of miracles is accredited to faith. So here we have an indication of their lack of faith despite Jesus reappearing from the dead and telling the disciples what is to be.

They had seen Jesus in front of them again, so their object permanence kicked in to assure them that He would return if they lost sight of Him again. However, their spirit permanence – trust in [God with them as the Holy Spirit], even when Jesus was not physically with them – was still developing.

It was a huge first step for the disciples to accept that Jesus could come back – alive! – after being

brutally killed. They had to work their way up to understanding God present as the Holy Spirit.

Thomas was not with them to see, so he did not even have that first step toward Spirit permanence. Like the distraught infant who will not be calmed until seeing her parent's face again, Thomas refused to believe the other disciples until he saw Jesus again for himself.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-appears-thomas/>

When Jesus did appear before Thomas, He did not scold him. Instead, He offered with abundant grace exactly what Thomas had said that he needed in order to believe, so that Thomas also could grow toward Spirit permanence.

Thomas did not even have to touch the marks; Jesus just offered, and then Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” – the most powerful confession of Jesus’s identity in the Gospel of John, as in the grace of His offering [a fully restored relationship of life, after death], Thomas saw God fully revealed in Jesus.

Then, for the sake of those (like us) who would not get to see the risen Savior walking this earth, Jesus proclaims that it is possible to believe - to develop Spiritual permanence - without requiring Jesus to appear; blessed, even: a thing to desire.

How do I do that, unless I see?

We have a very different experience of God from which to develop Spirit permanence. We never saw Jesus in the flesh, so we can only go by the declarations of those who did - like John, who wrote to the early Church.

In our epistle lesson today, he talks about having fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ.



picture from <https://tico.aswu.edu.eg/2018/04/>

Fellowship is defined as companionship or friendly association: it requires being in the presence of one another. We gather in fellowship here at the church and have struggled this past year at trying to maintain a sense of fellowship when we have been physically apart, because fellowship describes being together in a positive way.

So, to be in fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ, John must have been in the presence of God. The Holy Spirit was with him and he was calling others to join in that fellowship.

We experience God primarily as the Holy Spirit in our lives. Through the Holy Spirit we are in fellowship with our Creator and our Savior. We develop our Spirit permanence through growing in faith - seeking to know God better through the study of scripture, prayer, gathering in worship, and seeing how the Holy Spirit moves in our lives, especially through other people.

The reading from Acts describes what a community in fellowship with God is like: (Acts 4:32-35, NRSV)

“...[T]he whole group...were of one heart and soul... With great power [they] gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for... [they] ...distributed to each as any had need.”

Sounds to me like a lot of people with mature Spirit permanence living in the love of God. I pray that you are able to see the Holy Spirit working in every aspect of your life, that you may come to know the Almighty and experience the love of Jesus more fully; and that you may share that love in a way that helps others see God working through you.

Now for the grace which we have already received, let us respond with:

The Nicene Creed

UMH #880

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in the one holy catholic* and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism *universal
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

<Doxology>

<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

Holy God, we continue to hold on to the celebration
and triumph of Easter. As we look back over the past
year, we realize that many of us can identify with
Thomas's doubt.

“Can we be the church, the body of Christ, when we
can't see the body gathered in our sanctuary?” Yet
Christ has opened our eyes to his risen body that
can't be confined by walls and is not diminished by
precautions and social distance.

As we make our gifts to you, we affirm the
Resurrection power that we have seen, and so we say
again, “Alleluia!”

We also ask that You give us and wisdom as we go about our daily lives. And help us, Lord, with:

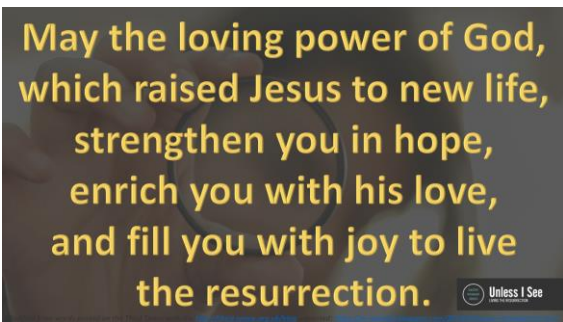
- Healing touch and comfort for all who are ailing.
 - Coronavirus victims - isolated; **school**; out-of-work; health care workers (especially: Marie Curri, Laura Davis, Nicole Marshall, Vince Marshall, Heidi Newton, Jennifer Tibbens-Scalzo) & those serving critical needs
 - **Lolita White** - recovering from surgery (afib ablation)
 - **Gary Sweet** - radiation therapy
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 - -
- Thanks for
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- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Travelers
 - Family far off
- Social unrest - dismantle racism and reform problem systems
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Help us to be fearless in talking about our faith as a normal part of daily living.

- For the sake of this our local church, one part of Your great church, guide each one of us this week to invite someone to come know You better.
- Help us to encourage one another toward faith in You and toward living together in true Christian community.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<The Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Thine Be the Glory" UMH #308>

<Benediction>¹



May the loving power of God,
which raised Jesus to new life,
strengthen you in hope,
enrich you with his love,
and fill you with joy to live
the resurrection.

background from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/living-the-resurrection/second-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

As we leave today, looking for the Almighty's manifest presence in our lives even when we least expect it:

May the loving power of God,
which raised Jesus to new life,
strengthen you in hope,
enrich you with his love,
and fill you with joy
to live the resurrection.

Go in grace, as the Holy Spirit guides you. Amen.

¹ Modified from words posted on the Third Space website. <http://third-space.org.uk/blog>, reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/02/easter-benediction.html>.