

# Daily Discipleship

## John 20:19-31

**Prayers of Discipleship:** *To Believe With a Trusting Heart*

**Focus Question:** *How do you come to believe the Good News of the resurrection?*

### word of life

**“Then Jesus 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.’”** (John 20:27)

Read John 20:19-31

The story of “doubting Thomas” from the Gospel of John is the appointed reading every year for the Second Sunday of Easter; and rightly so. In a few brief verses, the disciples of every age come to know the implications of and the gifts bestowed through the resurrection of Christ – the gifts of peace (“peace be with you” vs. 19) and joy (“the disciples rejoiced” vs. 20); the gift of the presence of the risen Christ in the Holy Spirit (“receive the Holy Spirit” vs. 22); the gift of faith (“blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” vs. 29); and the calling and mission (“as the Father has sent me, so I send you” vs. 21). All these gifts are expressed through the story of one who needed to see in order to believe – the disciple Thomas.

1. *What other gifts do we receive because of the resurrection of Christ?*
2. *What do you know about the disciple Thomas?*
3. *What does Thomas require in order to believe that Jesus is raised from the dead? Is this a reasonable request?*

Some would say that Thomas has been given a bad “rap” throughout the course of Christian history. Thomas simply desires what the other disciples have experienced; he wants to see living, unmistakable proof that Jesus – the same Jesus nailed to the cross and pierced by the soldier’s spear, the Jesus who died and was buried – has been raised from death.

4. *What “proof” or evidence can you give of Jesus’ resurrection?*

To focus solely on Thomas would be to miss the power of the message of the narrative. For the Gospel writer John, the experiences of the resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost are all present in these verses. The risen Jesus stands among them and breathes on the disciples gathered (vs. 22) – evidence of life, evidence of God’s power to create life out of that which had no life (See Genesis 2:7 where God “breathed life” into the dust of the ground to create humanity.) The risen Christ gives them the Holy Spirit – the gift of Pentecost. (See Acts 2.) And the risen Christ gives the disciples their mission – “as the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (See the mission mandate spoken by Jesus at the Ascension in Acts 1:8.)

5. *When in our life of faith are we joined to the risen Christ, given the gift of the Spirit, and sent out in mission?*

The story concludes with a blessing for disciples of every time and place. Not all were present on that first Easter morning. Not all were able to physically touch the wounded hands and side of Jesus. But the story is told in order that those who hear it might come to believe; and in believing, might know life in Christ’s name (vs. 31).

Maybe the familiar saying is reversed. Perhaps it’s not, “Seeing is believing,” but rather, “Believing is seeing.” Through the eyes of faith, we see the presence of the risen Christ in our midst, giving us the gift of life, forgiveness, and peace, and sending us forth to tell the Good News!

6. *What are some examples of “believing is seeing?”*

## **word among us**

Hands ... We use them quite a bit. It is said that you can tell a great deal about a person by their hands. The way someone shakes your hand; the rough, calloused hands of a manual laborer; the smooth, soft hands of a baby; the gnarled, arthritic hands of an elder worker – all tell us something about that person's work and life experiences.

1. *What are some other examples of how hands are used?*

Take a few moments to look at your hands.

2. *What do you see?*
3. *What do they say about you and your life experiences?*

As I look at my hands, I see a callous on my right middle finger where I hold my pen, a reminder that I spend time writing. I see two visible, constant reminders of two relationships in my life – my wedding band, and a ring given to me at my ordination as a pastor. I also see a visible reminder of prior work experiences and how fragile life is. There is a deep scar in the palm of my right hand – a scar from working on a piece of machinery on the farm. My whole hand – my whole arm – could have been caught in it; instead, just a deep scar as a constant reminder that life is a fragile gift.

On that first Easter evening, the grieving, fearful disciples were locked in a room. Suddenly, Jesus came and said, "Peace be with you." And then he showed them his hands. Just as our hands tell a great deal about ourselves, so too does Jesus' hands tell us a great deal about him. We see hands of healing giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and strength to the weak. We see hands that bless little children, that raise the dead, and that calm the troubled soul.

Most of all, we see wounded hands. The imprint of the nails of the cross on Jesus' hands is more than a mark of identification for the disciples. It tells of his love for them, and for us. His wounded hands reveal the price God paid to save us.

4. *What would it mean for you to look at the wounded hands of Jesus?*

Jesus came and stood among them and showed them his hands. To Mary Magdalene; to the fearful disciples; to those who doubted; to Thomas, who needed to see in order to believe; to the apostle Paul; to faithful followers – the risen Christ came; and he showed them his wounded hands. And he comes now and shows his wounded hands for our eyes of faith to see – in the breaking of bread, in hands folded in prayer, in healing hands of surgeons, nurses, and caregivers, in hands that reach out in concern for others, providing food for the hungry, offering care, comfort, and support, and guiding our work and our witness.

5. *Where do you see Christ's hands at work and present in your life?*
6. *How might you be used as the hands of Christ to extend care to those in need?*

### **Prayer**

O risen Christ, grant us eyes to see your hands at work in our lives. Use us as your hands of love and care to those in need. Amen

### **Dig Deeper**

Acts 5:27-32

### **last word**

Look for examples of Christ's hands at work  
in your everyday life.



*Daily Discipleship*

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