

4/12/26
2nd Sunday of Easter
For Group Meetings from April 5th – April 11th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Almighty and eternal God, the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt, may we, who have not seen, have faith in you and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (Matthew 28:1-10) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: John 20:19-31

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What emotions do you notice among the disciples at the beginning of the passage?
2. What physical barriers are mentioned (doors, absence, distance)?
3. How many times does the phrase "*Peace be with you*" appear? When is it repeated?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When have you experienced FOMO recently (a fear of missing out on something)?
2. What fears are present in your life right now?
3. What helps you recognize God's presence—and what makes it harder?

Memorize this verse: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'" (John 20:21) Where have you found peace this week?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 16. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Have you ever noticed how long it takes John to get around to telling us what he’s up to? Twenty-some chapters and finally he comes clean. Sort of. So, here’s what I mean. There are two elements of this week’s very familiar story that grabbed my attention. The first is about how John arranges the scenes of the story he tells. John describes a number of encounters with various figures: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man who receives his sight, Martha, Peter, Pilate. Taken together, these characters offer a variety of ways to respond to an encounter with Christ. Some are confused, some come to faith, some have questions, some fail to recognize Jesus, and so on. At the end of all of this comes Thomas whose movement from skepticism to faith in today’s reading (and then actually professing his faith) is John’s hope for all of us. That is, John hopes that, after reading the Gospel, we will, like Thomas, make the confession that Jesus is not only our Lord but also our God.

The second element is what we might call John’s “confession of purpose.” In verses 30-31 of today’s reading, he makes clear that he is offering no neutral account of Jesus, but made choices toward a certain end, naming what he’s after: you. Or at least “you” as the one who reads or listens to this Gospel. John is after you and your faith. He confesses that he hopes that by reading this Gospel you will come to faith, believe (or continue to believe) that Jesus is the Christ, God’s chosen One, and have life in his name. It strikes me that one week after celebrating Easter, this may be the perfect time to examine John’s “mission statement” and also take it as ours. That the reason we gather each week together isn’t to make God happy (though I’m sure it does) or to learn sound morals (though perhaps that happens) or even to learn the essentials of the Christian faith (that it would be nice if that happens from time to time, too). Rather, we gather so that we might encounter (or, better, be encountered by) the Risen Christ one more time and be caught up in faith so that we may experience God’s abundant life.

We come together because the life of faith can be joyous and wonderful and all that, but it can also, and frequently is, rather challenging. The loss of a loved one, or end of a relationship, or the inability to find a job or get into the school of one’s choice, or the persistent ache of loneliness, or a prolonged bout of illness, or a pervasive sense of anxiety about our larger community, country, or world. All these things wear at us. At these times, faith can be a great strength and support, or faith can be a casualty of these assaults. And so, we come together to hear the stories of Jesus read and interpreted so that we might hear Jesus speaking to us and, in turn, we might leave renewed in faith, hope, and confidence. From this vantage point, Jesus’ words to Thomas at the end of their encounter are less a rebuke of Thomas’ lack of believing and more of a blessing to all those who came after Thomas. Right up to us a couple millennia down the road. Who have believed without seeing! We come together so that Jesus might encounter us and, through this encounter, change us into the people God wants us to be.

Thanks be to God,
Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:
Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen