



NO SERMON NOTES THIS WEEK

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ASBURY DAILY STUDY GUIDE *April 8-13, 2024*

INTRODUCTION

The hours following Jesus' death were harrowing ones for the disciples. Everything they thought they knew suddenly seemed to be a lie. But then the unexpected happened: the tomb was empty! Even the people who should have expected this the most were seemingly caught off-guard. Jesus was alive! What a gift! Yet some needed to see Jesus for themselves to accept that gift.

This week, we're taking a deep dive into Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to "the Twelve" – the disciples who followed him throughout his earthly ministry – as recorded in the Gospel of John. This is the passage where we find the well-known account of "doubting Thomas" – the disciple who refused to believe unless he could see the resurrected Jesus with his own eyes.

Have you ever received an unexpected gift? Jesus gave the disciples some that changed their lives – and that can transform ours too.

Monday: John 20:19-20

After the Resurrection, we find that Jesus' disciples were still in hiding. Jesus' gift of eternal life didn't take away the current threat of the Jewish leaders potentially arresting and crucifying them, too. Sometimes an unexpected gift may take time to be able fully appreciate. What unexpected gift have you received that you came to appreciate more over time?

Tuesday: John 20:22

Jesus' appearance didn't come without an "action item" for the disciples. Throughout John's gospel, Jesus gives five different "as the Father..." statements: because God the Father has a trait or has given something to Jesus, Jesus also has that trait or is giving that thing to us. In John 10:15, Jesus speaks of how the Father knows him and he knows the Father. In John 15:9, Jesus speaks of the Father's love for him and, therefore, Jesus' love for the disciples. Now, in John 20:22, Jesus says because the Father sent him, Jesus is sending the disciples out to tell others about him. The unexpected gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples – the presence of God in them, always. How does the unexpected gift of God's love in your life encourage you to go out and tell others about that love?

Wednesday: John 20:23

Sometimes we need to hear things more than once for them to truly sink in. Here, Jesus tells the disciples in two different ways the importance of forgiveness:

*"If you **forgive** anyone's sins, their sins **are forgiven**; if you **do not forgive** them, they **are not forgiven**."*

Responsibility comes with the power to act as well as with implications in the absence of action.

Sometimes to fully receive an unexpected gift, we need to understand what the power of that gift is, both if we use it well and if we don't use it well. When have you received a gift that, in retrospect, you have not used well? What can taking the step to forgive someone mean for them? What can it mean for you?

Thursday: John 20:24-25

Thomas missed out. He wasn't there when Jesus first appeared to the rest of the disciples. Dubbed "Doubting Thomas," we usually think of his doubt being because him not having a first-hand physical experience: he needs to see to believe. But don't miss what else he's doubting here: he doesn't believe his friends' account of Jesus' appearance to them. In the midst of the modern onslaught of mis- and dis-information, how do you make sure you're doing due diligence to make sure something is true, but also not missing out on something important because of your own skepticism?

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Friday: John 20:26-29

The next week, when Jesus returns to the house the disciples were in, Jesus apparently already knows of Thomas' doubts – Thomas doesn't express them before Jesus tells Thomas to examine Jesus' wounds for himself. We always picture Thomas actually physically examining Jesus – touching his hands, examining his feet – but John's account doesn't explicitly tell us that he did; it simply tells us that Jesus spoke and Thomas believed.

The completion of this story is that Jesus gives what could be seen as an addition to the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) – another “blessed are...” statement: “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

What are things you not seen for yourself but believed anyway? Why did you believe them? How can your belief in Jesus be strengthened because of what you've learned from your experience of believing those things?

MOVING FORWARD

An unexpected gift can be a true blessing. As you close out your week, consider once again what the gift of Jesus' resurrection truly means in your life – both between you and God and between you and others:

What does it mean that you have been forgiven? And what does that mean for how you live in community with others?

Particularly when compared to the implications of the rest of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5), what does it mean that Jesus says “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed?”

What does it mean for us that Jesus “sent” the disciples to tell others about his life and Resurrection?

What does it mean for us that Jesus has triumphed over death to give us life with him, forever?