

April 19, 2020 ~Praying for Believing in What We Cannot See~

**“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” Now Thomas (also known as Didymus ), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus performed many other 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 Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:19-31**

Gracious God, Heavenly Father, today’s Gospel lesson taught us about believing. After the resurrection, 10 of his beloved disciples were locked in a room when Jesus appeared to them as a physical person and spoke to them in his own voice. They recognized their teacher for who he was and received the power of his Holy Spirit to continue teaching God’s promise of forgiveness and salvation. Then and there in a locked room, your eternal power over life and death was undeniably established. You appeared, Lord Jesus, as a physical person with wounds in your hands and in your side. You overcame physical challenges and phenomenon of this world in that locked room. Later when those who had seen told Thomas about their amazing encounter with you, Thomas responded like so many of us do when told about something we haven’t personally witnessed. Thomas didn’t believe, but Jesus didn’t reject the disciple he needed to use in ministry. A week later Thomas found himself in the presence of Jesus. As the doubting disciple saw and heard and touched his teacher in that same locked room, Thomas truly believed. Jesus was alive and his Holy Spirit would lead the disciples and provide all they needed to continue teaching truth that led to believing and salvation. Thank you, God, that when we doubt or wander away, you always remain with us and in us. We are grateful your Holy Spirit is our ever-present help, encouraging us to share our time, our possessions, and your Gospel of Salvation with people you’ve placed in our lives.

Once again today, we are sheltered behind our own “locked doors” in pandemic sheltering from the world. You haven’t turned your back us, God, and even though we can’t see your physical appearance, by the power of your Holy Spirit we feel your presence, your peace, and your love. We recognize the little nudges to call someone, write a note to mail, or stop and

pray. What a miraculous God you are! In the confusing and unfamiliar circumstances around us and around the world you created, we know you are with us, not a safe distance away, but so close we could crawl up into your lap. Your Son is alive and reigns with you right now in unity with the Holy Spirit. We praise you Lord; our stronghold, our refuge, our strength to persevere, and our hope for the time to come when your wisdom reveals to medical and scientific researchers healing treatment and a vaccine to protect your people on earth.

Lord , we are thankful to be you children. The disciples knew you and saw you after your resurrection. You breathed on them and they received your Holy Spirit. They spent the rest of their lives ministering as living witnesses of their Living Savior. They spread Christianity by the power of the Holy Spirit in different languages everywhere they went from Jerusalem to Damascus, Antioch, Greece, Asia Minor, and Rome. Their living witness made believers of people who never saw you. The courage and obedience of the Apostles glorifies you even today, Lord Jesus.

Our thankful hearts are filled with love for you, Father God, and for all the people you've placed in our lives who planted and fed seeds of our own belief. They were people who never saw their Savior face to face, but knew without a doubt that he alone was the Son of God sent down from Heaven to live like a man among sinful people. We are people who could never save ourselves from judgement and condemnation. Thank you for loving us in spite of who we are, Lord.

You are our God of Grace. You are our Merciful Father. Believing is part of our faith life, and our belief assures eternal life we cannot see on this side of Heaven. Help us use this sheltered time not only to reach out to family or people we know who live alone, but also to reach out to you in prayers for everyone working to care for hospitalized and home quarantined coronavirus patients. Remind us to stop what we're doing to pray for all working in essential jobs, first responders, and our military personnel. Prompt us to pray for jobless workers and for all children and their home teachers. We ask you for our own continued protection from Covid-19 infection and continued diligence in following guidelines to prevent infection from our own hands.

Thank you God for our faith to believe In what we cannot see. Thank you, God, for our faith to believe In what we cannot see. We haven't seen you face to face, but we've seen you working in people, in nature, and in us these past 7 weeks. In the name of our Savior Jesus, we lift up our prayers to you and ask that you help us use this time with so few distractions to grow in our faith lives to be prepared to share your Gospel when we are again free to be among your people. Amen