

**St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church**  
**Formation in Faith Lectionary**  
**2018**

**April 1**

***The Resurrection***

John 20:1-18

On the third day after the crucifixion, Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb only to find that it is empty. The stone has been rolled away and Jesus is not there. At first she and the other disciples are puzzled, thinking Jesus' body has been stolen. But then Mary has a startling encounter. Jesus has been raised from the dead, and all of history has now suddenly changed.

Questions for Discussion:

*John tells us that Mary came to the tomb alone, but it surprised to find it empty. How do you think Mary felt to find the tomb empty?*

*Peter and John rush to the empty tomb to see what has happened. The passage tells us they saw and believed, but did not understand. What does this tell us about faith? Do we need to fully understand in order to believe?*

*Mary and the other disciples initially think that Jesus' body has been stolen. Jesus had often spoken of his coming death and resurrection. Yet even when Mary encounters the angels at the tomb, she does not understand what has happened. Why do you think she misunderstood?*

*Mary initially does not recognize Jesus, and mistakes him for the gardener. Jesus has been raised, but also changed somehow. What does this tell us about the resurrection of Jesus, and what it might mean for us?*

*Jesus calls out Mary's name, and only then does she realize who he is. She recognizes Jesus' voice. Where do you hear the voice of Jesus? Do ever feel that Jesus calls out to you?*

*Mary responds to the joy of meeting Jesus by going to tell the disciples all that she has seen. How do we respond to Jesus' resurrection? When we meet Jesus in our lives, are we eager to tell others what we have seen?*

**April 8**

***The Upper Room***

John 20:19-29

The disciples are gathered in the upper room, still frightened and seemingly uncertain of what has happened, when the risen Lord appears to them. Jesus stands once more in their midst, to show them his wounds, to offer them peace, and to bestow the Holy Spirit. He comes also with a commission, not only for the disciples, but for all who will come after them.

Questions for Discussion:

*The disciples had heard Mary's testimony about the resurrection, but they are still hiding in fear of the Jewish and Roman authorities who had crucified Jesus. Why do you think they were still afraid?*

*Jesus appears to them saying "Peace be with you." How do you think the disciples felt to encounter the risen Jesus? How would you feel?*

*Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon them and tells them that he is sending them, just as the Father has sent them. What does it mean for you that Christ has sent you into the world, just as he was sent?*

*Thomas is initially skeptical of what they tell him. He missed the first appearance of Jesus, and cannot quite believe it. Our world values scientific evidence and proof. Is Thomas' doubt understandable? How might you feel if your friends told you of something so miraculous? How can we overcome such doubt and demonstrate faith to those around us?*

*Jesus has appeared seemingly out of nowhere, yet he still has a body for them to see and touch. He still carries the scars of the crucifixion. His wounds were not erased, they were transformed. What does this tell us about the resurrection? What might this tell us about what awaits us?*

*Doubting Thomas becomes Believing Thomas as he confesses Jesus as Lord and God. Jesus responds that while Thomas may believe after seeing, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." How are you blessed by your faith? What does faith mean to you?*

**April 15**

***Eating with Jesus***

Luke 24:13-43

As two of Jesus' followers travel down the road to Emmaus, Jesus appears to join them and talk with them. Once again, they do not recognize him. As they talk about all that has happened in Jerusalem, it becomes clear that they also do not recognize the meaning of Jesus and all that he did. While Jesus interprets the scripture for them, it is not until they break bread together that they are able to realize the real truth of Jesus.

Questions for Discussion:

*As with Mary and the other disciples, the two on the road to Emmaus do not recognize Jesus at first. Something about him is different. He has not simply been resuscitated, but resurrected and transformed. Are there times when we may not recognize Jesus around us?*

*Cleopas describes Jesus as a mighty prophet, and says they hoped that he would "redeem Israel." Jesus tells them that they have misunderstood, and explains the scriptures to them, but they still do not recognize him. Why not? Were they still hoping Jesus would free them from Roman rule? How might their expectations of Jesus have clouded their sight?*

*It is only when they break bread together at Emmaus that Cleopas and his companion recognize Jesus. This is thought to be one of the first references to the Eucharist. Do we recognize Jesus in the bread and wine? How is our fellowship around the table essential to being with Jesus?*

*Though Cleopas and his companion had heard the testimony of the women about the resurrection, they still set off for Emmaus. They seem to be fleeing away from Jerusalem. But after encountering Jesus they turn back to Jerusalem to tell others what happened. How does meeting Jesus change you? When you meet Jesus do you tell others, or do you go your own way?*

*Jesus appears before the disciples in Jerusalem and confronts their fears and doubts. Touching him and eating with him only serve to show that he is not just a ghost or apparition. He is real. What fears do we have? How do we encounter Jesus in our midst? Is Jesus just a spirit to us, or is he real?*

**April 22**

**Ascension**

Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus and the disciples go up a high mountain back in Galilee. There, Jesus will bless them and give them the Great Commission. Even though they harbor some doubts, Jesus sends them out into the world to make disciples of all nations and to baptize others in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He will ascend into the heavens, but they are to go and transform the world.

Questions for Discussion:

*Matthew tells us that the disciples worship Jesus on the mountain, “but some doubted.” After all that they had seen and heard, doubt is still a part of their lives. Yet Jesus commissions them anyway. What does this tell us about faith and doubt? Does doubt disqualify us from ministry, or are we to carry on in mission even as we carry doubt within us?*

*Jesus tells them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Jesus’ death and resurrection have brought redemption to the whole of creation, and the covenant promise God made to Israel has been open to the world. What does it mean that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth? What does it mean for rulers and leaders that also claim authority?*

*Jesus sends them out to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.” Baptism is to be an important part of bringing people into relationship with God, through Christ. What does it mean to “make disciples”? What role does Baptism play in your own discipleship?*

*While we are called to respect the beliefs and convictions of others, what does it mean to us that we are called to make disciples of all nations? Are we called to tell other people about Jesus? How are we to do that?*

*While Luke tells us that Jesus ascended into heaven, Matthew’s Gospel ends with these words of the Great Commission. What does that tell us about the importance of the Great Commission? In what ways does this tell us that Jesus is still with us?*

**April 29**

***Pentecost***

Acts 2:1-11

The disciples are gathered together on the Day of Pentecost, when a rush of wind fills the house, tongues of flame appear over each of their heads, and they are filled with the Holy Spirit. To the amazement of everyone around them, they begin to speak in other languages, and the various pilgrims who have come to the Temple from all over the Roman world hear the Gospel in their own tongue. From this day the disciples become true apostles, spreading the good news of Jesus to all the world.

Questions for Discussion:

*The apostles are gathered together after Jesus ascended, when the Holy Spirit descends upon them. There is a rush of wind, tongues of fire appear, and the disciples begin to preach in different languages. How have you felt the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you ever feel a special movement of the Spirit with other members of the Church? How does it make you feel?*

*Though Jesus had commanded them on the Mount of Ascension to go forth into the world, the apostles seem to have remained in Jerusalem. It is not until after Pentecost, that the work of proclamation really begins. How does the Holy Spirit help us do what Christ has commanded us? Are there areas of your life and faith where you could use the help of the Holy Spirit?*

*The apostles begin to speak in tongues, with the Holy Spirit giving them the ability to proclaim the Gospel in different languages. What does this tell us about how the Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry?*

*Jewish pilgrims from all over the Eastern Roman Empire had come to Jerusalem for Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, commemorating the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. Despite being from different countries with different cultures and languages, they all hear the Gospel in their own language. What does this tell us about how different people receive the good news? How do each of us encounter God in our own life and circumstance?*

*The Day of Pentecost is often considered the "Birthday of the Church" and people will wear red on that Sunday. Why do you think this is?*