

John 20:19-31 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin^[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he 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.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,^[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name

Today is one of the things that I love about the church year...just when we think that we only get one week, one Sunday to celebrate Easter, we are reminded that we actually get 7 weeks. 7 weeks to think about and remember and contemplate and act on the Good News of Resurrection Day. We are reminded that Easter isn't just an event, it is a state of the heart, a state of mind, it is why we are who we are, it is why we live the way we do, why we make the decisions that we make

Today is the second Sunday in the Easter season and the scripture lesson that we heard is a wonderful reminder to us that Jesus is not finished yet; it is a sign to us that the work of the church has just barely begun. This is where we find our joy...He is Risen (He is risen indeed) and we begin to understand the answer to the question that I asked last week. Now What?

Will you pray with me please? May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight O Lord. Our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen

Today's writings from John are enough to make your head explode. There is so much good stuff in it... Jesus appearing to the disciples through locked doors, a little mini-Pentecost with Jesus blowing the Holy Spirit on the gathered disciples, good old Thomas and his doubts, the guilt producing statement of "Blessed are those who believe and have not seen"... I mean really there are at least 5 hours' worth of sermons here, but what caught my eye this week were the last two verses in this very long selection, "Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. 31 But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name."

So, right off the bat I am irritated as all get out about the fact that there was a bunch of other stuff that happened. When I read that there were many other miracles that John didn't record I want to know what they are! I want more knowledge and understanding, and I am going to guess that I would not be alone in feeling this. In our effort to figure it out, to understand this whole Jesus thing, to maybe understand more about what it means to be a Christian we want to know!

John in his usual wordy and theological way is telling us that yes, there are more things, more signs, more teachings that I **could** tell you about, but I have recorded the things that you **need** to know about. I have written about works and signs that tell you about Jesus, his character, his power and when you read all of these things, it should be **enough** for you to believe that Jesus was the Christ, and that he was and is the One and Only Son of God.

John is making it clear for us that he took specific selections from Jesus' life and recorded them for us for a specific purpose.

I am always intrigued by John's writings because he is the only one of the four gospel writers who was actually there, he had a ringside seat for the majority of Jesus' ministry, but there is nothing in his writings about Christ's birth, nothing in it about His baptism, or about the selection of His disciples. There is scarcely anything about the facts of Jesus' outward life at all. There is barely a word about the whole of His ministry in Galilee. There is very little about Jesus' moral teaching and no word about the last Supper. There is not one of the parables and there are only seven of the miracles before the Resurrection. Nearly half of John's gospel is taken up with the things which took place in the last week of Jesus' life, and the incidents of and after His Resurrection. The rest of the book to a greater extent consists of several conversations which are based upon miracles that Jesus performed principally for the sake of the conversations and John tells us that he recorded these seven

events for us to read so that we can believe. There are 35 recorded miracles in the gospels and John chooses 7 in order to prove his point.

Really? Seven things? I can find more stuff than that on the internet to make me believe! Why just yesterday I read about a woman in Florida who found a cross and a crown imprinted into her gold fish cracker that she knows is a sign from God... What John is trying to get us to understand is that it is not the signs that are important, all of the miracles and parables and all that stuff, they aren't important, those are just things that Jesus did in order to help us to believe who he was. What is important to John, the recording that John has put out there for us is that Jesus is the Son of God and it isn't about the miracles or parables or other signs, Jesus purpose was to re-present a new revelation of God for us, Jesus's purpose was to bring us back to God, Jesus's purpose was to help us to understand that it is not hard to have a relationship with God, that all we have to do is love God and love our neighbor.

I think that John understands far better than the other Gospel writers and even better than we do that the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection was not all about Jesus. Everything that Jesus did, every parable that he told, every miracle he performed, he did so we could understand the amazing and all-consuming love that God has for us. Even now, as we celebrate the season of Christ's resurrection it is with the knowledge and understanding that Jesus didn't make that happen on his own. God did it just like Jesus told us God would and the message

that we need to hear today is that if God raised Jesus from death into life , God will do the same for us and all we have to do is read and believe.

So, I started out feeling irritated with John for not sharing all of the secrets with us, for not telling us the things that would prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was the Son of God...and then I realized that is exactly the point he is trying to make...Jesus does not have to prove anything to us, he was exactly who he said he was, he told parables and performed miracles so that we could understand, not to **make** us believe but so that we **could** believe.

The love of Jesus, the love that God has for us has never been about forcing us to love; it has always been about acceptance, our acceptance of that love that is so freely and generously given. That is the message that was recorded by John, God loves us so much that God sent Jesus to earth to help us return to God. Jesus was allowed to die in order for God to provide the ultimate miracle, the victory of life over death.

So who cares if John didn't share all of the stories with us? He recorded the most important part of the message, for us to hear and believe and celebrate for 50 days. God loves us, God, loves us, God loves us! HA

