

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of April 16, 2023

Dealing with Doubt, John 20:19-29

See www.youtube.com/@columbiamethodistchurch, (you can fast forward to the sermon)

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)

- Since this is our first meeting, take time to go around the circle and introduce yourself. You may wish to also share basic information about your family and your background with Columbia Methodist Church.
- If joys or concerns come up that you would like to include in the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week please note them in the space below for later.

- What is the biggest surprise you ever had?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the scriptures from this week's sermon message and then discuss the questions which follow as time allows. You may need to be selective with the questions to manage the time.

John 20:19-29

¹⁹ 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!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." ²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

²⁵ 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." ²⁶ 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!" ²⁷ 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." ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- The Easter Sunday scriptures were the previous verses of John chapter 20 where Peter and John were moved to belief after seeing graveclothes in the empty tomb and Mary believed after Jesus appeared to her in the garden by the tomb. In these next verses from this past Sunday, why do you think the disciples are behind locked doors and in fear of the Jewish leaders (vs. 19)?
 - Why do you think Thomas was not with them (vs. 24)?
- How would Jesus' manner of appearing, his words and his actions be a comfort to the disciples in the first appearing (vs. 19-24)?

- Why do you think Thomas stayed the rest of the week with the disciples even though he didn't believe their testimony about seeing Jesus raised from the dead (vs. 26)?
- Do you agree with Timothy Keller that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, there would not be much reason to be interested in his teachings? Why or why not?
- How is it that the author of *40 Days of Doubt*, at one time considered himself Christian at the time, but did not believe in a bodily resurrection of Christ?
- Why do you think despite Jesus' invitation to touch his wounds when he appeared to Thomas in verses 26-27, Thomas did not do so but simply believed?
- In the 11am service, what reasons given for belief in the resurrection from the book *40 Days of Doubt*, by Eric Huffman, did you find the most compelling- 1- The early witnesses believed in bodily resurrection, 2- the first century graffiti in Peter's house that claimed Jesus was God, 3- Jesus's own brother James believing he was God and giving his life for the faith or 4- the explosive growth of the early church?
- How was author Eric Huffman's moment of belief in the resurrection similar to Thomas's in verse 28?
 - Quote from his book- "I remember standing on the shore at the Sea of Galilee after weighing all the evidence, and whispering to myself, "It's real. My God, it all really happened." It wasn't an easy thing for me to admit; I had built my reputation on the idea that I knew more about Jesus than the New Testament authors did. But once I said it out loud, I knew my life could never be the same."
- Why do you think Thomas is not most known for or nicknamed according to what he did with his life afterwards in Christian service? What do you most want to be remembered for?

Other Related Readings (10 min)

- Would a volunteer please read aloud 1 Peter 1:3-9.
- How does the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead offer believers a "living hope?" (vs. 3)
- Does it surprise you that suffering is still a part of the Christian life (vs. 6-7)? Why or why not?
- Like Jesus, how does the Apostle Peter affirm those of us who believe in Jesus but have never seen him with our own eyes (vs. 8-9)? To what end?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)

- As you reflect upon the sermon and the scripture readings above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
- How does knowing that not even death is final because of the miraculous power of God, give you hope for present life circumstances and issues you may be facing?
- How does knowing that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us through faith affect how we approach our daily living?
- This week, how might we embrace the resurrection of Christ as a basis to have a less fearful and more joyful or free attitude?

➤ Witness and Closing (5 minutes)

Why is worship and personal profession of faith a natural response to believing Jesus was raised from the dead (My Lord and My God)?

- When was the last time someone else heard from us about our belief in Jesus and His resurrection?
- A volunteer may lead the group in prayer about the joys and concerns shared earlier and others