

Our *GUIDE*

for little ones

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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 58

The Appearance to Thomas

Luke 24:44-46; John 20:22, 24-29

The disciples of Jesus are glad. Jesus has showed Himself to them. They believe, now, on Sunday evening, that He really did rise from the dead. And they are happy.

They were so happy, in fact, that they probably forgot, for a moment, that they were still ... *confused*. If Jesus would now leave them, they would soon start wondering all over again about everything that happened on *Friday*. Did Jesus' enemies, on Friday, get the best of Him? Did they gain a *victory* over Him when they nailed Him to the cross ... or was Jesus Master *even over that*? And if He *was*, what can possibly be the *purpose of God* in the *death* of the *Messiah*?

Jesus knew their problem. He would help them. First, Jesus reminded them that He had told them, ahead of

time, exactly what would happen on Friday. His *capture*, and *trial*, and *crucifixion* — Jesus had predicted them *all*. All, therefore, must have been according to *plan* — *God's* plan.

But ... but ... *why*? How can that *be*? How does a *shameful death* fit with a *glorious kingdom*? The disciples had never understood that. They look now, expectantly, hopefully, to the Master.

Jesus will help them. He will show them the Scriptures, as He had done for two travelers on a road to Emmaus. But now He does still *more*. He opens their *understanding*. How did He do

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

that? He did it by *breathing on them*.

No, there was no magic in Jesus' *breath*. Jesus' breathing on them was a *picture*. And He told His disciples what it meant. "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," He said. Yes, it's the *Holy Spirit*, the Spirit of *Christ*, who gives understanding — *spiritual* understanding, understanding of the things of Jesus' kingdom.

And, lo and behold, it *happened*. Right then and there. They *understood*. "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day," Jesus said. Jesus pointed them, of course, to Old Testament Scriptures. And they *understood*. Always before, what Jesus had told them about Himself and about His kingdom had seemed so *mysterious*. Now, for the first time, and *right after He breathed on them*, Jesus' instruction started to *make sense* to them. There could be only one explanation — the *Holy Spirit*.

Did the disciples now understand, fully, all of Jesus' work? Could they now go out and preach? No, that would not come till Pentecost. But already here on Easter Sunday they started fitting together the pieces of the puzzle that for three years had baffled them.



And Thomas missed it all. He was not there. He did not, therefore, see Jesus. And he did not receive the Holy Spirit. So he did not yet *believe*. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails," Thomas said, "I will not believe."

Do you understand Thomas' prob-

lem? He did not argue that a resurrection was impossible. Lazarus, after all, had come out of the grave. But what the rest of the disciples are now telling Thomas about *Jesus* is something so *entirely different*. Jesus *seems to be back* ... but not *really* back. He *appears* ... but then He *disappears*. He can go *through walls* ... but then be *touched*. He seems to be both a *spirit* ... and a *body*. This is all so *strange*. A *real* body, Thomas thinks, cannot go through walls. What the other disciples saw, therefore, must have been Jesus' *soul*.

A week later, on the following Sunday, Jesus gave Thomas opportunity to see and touch. Once more, the disciples are together in a room with the doors shut, and Jesus appears suddenly among them. He looks directly at Thomas. Thomas must already have squirmed. And then this disciple hears Jesus repeat his own words of disbelief. "Reach hither thy finger," Jesus said, "and behold my hands; and be not faithless, but believing."



Did Thomas reach out and touch? No, he didn't have to do that. He knew the face, he knew the voice, he knew the gentleness of the Master in helping this doubting disciple. Who can this be but the *risen Lord*.

And more. With his understanding opened, surely, by the Holy Spirit, he saw something else. He saw Jesus' *glory* in a way that he had never known it before. "My Lord," Thomas said, "and (notice this) my *God*."

Thomas was right. Lord ... and God!

How Well Did You Listen?

1. What did Jesus give to His disciples when He *breathed on them*? Why did they need this gift?
2. Which one of the disciples did not, on Easter Sunday, receive the gift of the Spirit?
3. What did Thomas say he would have to do before he would believe that Jesus really arose?
4. When did Thomas see Jesus? What did Jesus say to him? How did Thomas answer?

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes

John 20:21; 21:1-13

When Jesus was hanging on a cross on Calvary on that first Good Friday long ago, not one person in the whole wide world knew why He was there. None understood but God alone.

Today, the glorious gospel of Jesus has been proclaimed throughout the world. There are believers in America. But so also are there believers in Asia, and Africa, and Europe — in Jamaica, and the Philippines, and Myanmar, and Ghana, and Northern Ireland. Jesus' sheep are being gathered from people of every color and every nation. That's wonderful isn't it? And amazing.



How did that happen? How did it happen that the gospel has been preached *throughout the world*? It all started in that little room in Jerusalem on the first Easter Sunday. It started when Jesus breathed on His disciples, and when He opened to them the Scriptures, so that they understood that He had died *to save sinners*. The disciples were the first to hear it. It was great good news. It was the *gospel*. People must be *told*. Who will *tell* them? That was the question that had to be answered in that little room in Jerusalem.

For three years, Jesus *Himself* had preached the gospel. He had been sent by God to do that. During those years His disciples had, for the most part, just tagged along — listening and learning. But those days are past. No more will Jesus visit the synagogues. No more will He walk the hills of Galilee. The disciples could see that. How, then, will His people *hear*? Listen. “As my Father hath sent *me*,” Jesus said to His disciples, “even so send I *you*.” The gospel will be preached by *them* — throughout the world, beginning in Jerusalem. No longer are they just *disciples* (followers), but *apostles* — *sent out*.

Imagine what the disciples must have thought of *that*. Each one must have thought in his heart, “Who, *me*? I must *preach*? And not only in Jerusalem but to *all nations*? How can I do *that*?”

They did well, of course, to wonder about their ability to do it. Not one of them had that power — in himself.

But they need not worry. Just wait, Jesus said. Soon, in Jerusalem, you will be “endued with *power* from on *high*.” That’s all you will need.

Jesus didn’t let it go at that, however. Knowing the fearfulness, and weakness, of His disciples, He will give them a *sign*.

Jesus told His disciples to go to Galilee, and to wait for Him to appear to them there. So they did that. They went to Galilee. And they waited.

After waiting for some time, Peter decided to get busy *doing* something. “I go a-fishing,” he said. And the six other disciples who were with him said, “We also go with thee.”



The men were experienced fishermen. Before they became disciples of Jesus they had fished *for a living*. They had fishing *boats*. They had big, strong *nets* that they dragged through the water to catch fish. They knew where the good fishing spots were, and what were the best times for fishing. They were experts.



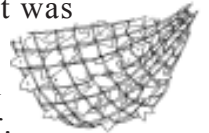
So off they went — to the right places, at the right time. Night time. All night they fished. And, to their great surprise, they caught ... *nothing*. Over and over they dragged that heavy net through the water, pulled it up, and found in it not a single fish! By morning, they must have been all tired out — with nothing to show for all their work.

With the sun beginning to peek up in the east, they must have decided it was

time to give up. They were convinced that there was no fish in these waters. Looking, then, toward the land, they saw in the early morning light a man on the shore. The man called out to them to ask if they had caught any fish. They answered, No. And then the man gave them some advice. “Cast the net,” He said, “on the other side of the boat, and you will find.”

Even if these seven men were not experienced fishermen, they would surely think, “That’s silly. If there aren’t any fish on the *left* side of this boat, why would there be fish on the *right* side?”

But the man on the shore sounded so *confident*, so *sure* of Himself. So the disciples decided to give it a try. And, to their utter amazement, their net was immediately full of fish — so many, that not even seven men could lift it up out of the water.



John, then, knew at once who it was that stood on the shore. “It is the Lord,” he said to Peter. And Peter immediately lost all interest in the fish. He jumped overboard and swam to shore — to see *Jesus*.

The other six disciples stayed with the boat, brought it to shore, and tied the top of the net (still in the water) to the side of the boat. Then they, too, came ashore, and saw that breakfast was ready for them — a fire, fish on it, and bread — provided, somehow, by Jesus. But before inviting them to sit down to eat, Jesus told them to take care of



their fish. Jesus wanted them to *see*, and to *think about*, what had just happened.

What did they find in their net? After dragging it onto the shore and emptying it, they counted their catch — 153 large fish! That was unbelievable. So many fish were in the net that they would have expected their net to *break*. But it didn't. Not a single fish got away.

Then Jesus said, "Come and dine."

They probably ate in silence — each of the disciples pondering in his own heart the great miracle that they had just seen. They must have thought back to the time, long ago, when Jesus had said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." To the disciples, those had been *mysterious* words. They didn't understand them. In following Jesus, they were hoping someday to be *princes*. How will they — as princes — *catch men*? The disciples didn't know.

But now things are *changing*. Their Lord had *died*. But He *arose*. And He stands before them now more glorious than ever before. Somehow, their hope of being princes didn't seem anymore to be so ... so ... *right*. They have a *story* to tell. They have been witnesses of something *stupendous*. There's a gospel to be proclaimed. Salvation ... for sinners ... in Jesus. Who would even want to be just a prince?

But how can *they* — poor, unlearned fishermen — be ambassadors of the King? Why would anyone even *listen to them*?

That was an important question. And the disciples understood that Jesus had just answered it — not with *words*, but with a *sign*, a *picture*.

The picture was about the *gathering of the church*. A great, great work, that would be. And how would it be done? Would Jesus do it *personally*, as He had done before? No. Would angels from heaven, with faces shining bright as the sun, proclaim the gospel? No. Would there be great signs in the heavens? No. Just preaching. By common, ordinary men. That's all. Foolish, it would seem. As foolish as it was to cast a net on the other side of the boat and expect to catch fish.



But it works. Why? Not because of how masterful the sermons are. Not because of how powerful the speaking is. Not because of how brilliant the arguments are. Jesus had showed them that. With all of their *skill* as fishermen, they hadn't caught even one little fish. Who brought the fish into the net? *Jesus*. Who *opens the hearts of sinners*, so that they believe the gospel? *Jesus*. By His Spirit.

Yes, the disciples *must preach*. But they don't have to worry about *their skill*, as if Jesus is *turning over to them* the gathering of His church. No, they serve a risen Savior, who is Himself powerful to save. *He* will draw. The net will be *full*. And not *one* will be lost. What a comfort! — for the disciples ... and for the church till the end of the world.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. Who preached the gospel during Jesus' lifetime? Whom did Jesus appoint to preach the gospel after Him?
2. What were the disciples called, after they were *sent out* to preach the gospel?
3. What did Peter decide to do, while the disciples were waiting for Jesus to appear to them in Galilee?
4. They fished all night. How many fish did they catch? Why did they decide to try one more time? How many fish, *then*, did they catch?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. How did Jesus show the disciples that His crucifixion on Friday was according to *God's plan*?
2. The disciples needed also to know *why* Jesus had to die. How did Jesus make it possible for them at last to understand *that* too?
3. Thomas said that he would not believe till he saw with his own eyes. What was it that Thomas would not believe?
4. When Thomas finally did see Jesus, what did he believe about Him?
5. At the Sea of Galilee, Jesus gave His dis-

ciples a sign, or picture, to teach them about their preaching. What did they learn from their *empty* net all night long? Their *full* net in the morning? Their *unbroken* net with so many fish?

Memory Verse

John 21:6 "Cast ye the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

Color the shapes with dots.
What do you see?

