



# Small Group Study Guide for April 11, 2021

*Our Savior Lutheran Church and School*

**Theme:** Most famously, St. Thomas is remembered for doubting the words of his fellow disciples when they told him that Christ had indeed been raised from the dead. He had not been with them in the Upper Room on Easter evening when the Lord had appeared. He announced his stubborn doubt instead. In great mercy, Christ appeared again a week later, this time Thomas was with them. Thomas then confessed, “My Lord and my God!” Christ made Himself to be present in the midst of His people to deliver His peace to them.

## **Getting Started:**

1. Before getting into some questions, here is what the Church’s tradition tells us about Thomas after Pentecost: Thomas reportedly traveled as far east as India. To this day, a group of Christians in India still refer to themselves as “Christians of St. Thomas.” It is believed he was martyred for Christ by being killed with a spear, and thus his symbol is a spear with a builder’s square (for he was one of the architects by whom Christ built His Church). His feast day in the West has been observed on December 21 at least since the ninth century. Does anything strike you about Thomas and his story?
2. While the sermon text includes a great wealth of important things—far too much for one sermon!—the sermon focused on St. Thomas. At some point, he received the nickname, “Doubting Thomas.” Doubt and unbelief threaten and attack our faith all the time. If you are willing, has there been a time(s) where you really struggled like Thomas?

## **In the Word: John 20:19-31. Please read through this section of the text.**

3. It’s always important for us to remember that the chapter and verse markings in the Bible are not original. They certainly help us in being able to refer to certain passages with ease; however, they can also introduce confusion and break up texts that go together. The events that occur from John 20:1-25 all take place on the same day—Easter Sunday. Look through the text, what all took place on that glorious day?
4. Jesus appears in the midst of His disciples on Easter Sunday. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! What does Christ do when He appears? Especially with the Holy Spirit (whom you receive as God continues to create and give faith to you and when you were baptized)?

5. Don't you think it's interesting that Jesus could have appeared to Thomas later that same night when Thomas issued his challenge? Or the next day, or the day after that, and so on, but no...Jesus has no further interaction with Thomas until the following week when Thomas joins the assembly of disciples on the Lord's Day. What do you make of that?
6. What does Jesus teach us about the power of His words? Read again John 20:30-31, what is the one reason for which these things were written?

### Putting it Together

7. The Gospel reading includes events from the first two Sundays of the Church's joy in Her Risen Savior – Easter Sunday and the following Sunday. Christ appears to His disciples as they gather on the Lord's Day and initiates a pattern for the Church to live from, starting with the first Easter Sunday and going on to the Day of His return! What does Christ promise about what goes on when His disciples gather together in the assembly?
8. A theme of the sermon was that Christ's words do and give *exactly* what they say. What words does Christ speak in the Gospel reading? Jesus speaks those words to you as well, but what other words has He declared to you?
9. Thomas committed a grave sin in our Gospel reading – a sin that we are all tempted by and attacked with by the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. The sin of setting ourselves up as the sole judge of what is true. The sin of listing out the criterion which we demand God to accomplish in order to have our attention or even our faith. How do we struggle against such temptations and attacks?
10. After Jesus appears once again to the disciples (with Thomas present this time), this is what Jesus eventually says to Thomas: "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who *have not seen* and yet *have believed*." Notice that that is past tense! Blessed then are the saints of the Old Covenant, who believed and waited in hope for the coming of Christ. But in a way, are we not like the Old Testament saints? Do we too, not see only by faith? Why then is it important for us to continue the pattern of the Church's life that was initiated by Christ of gathering in the assembly?

**Prayer:** Almighty and ever-lasting God, You strengthened Your apostle Thomas with firm and certain faith in the resurrection of Your Son. Grant us such faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that we may never be found wanting in Your sight; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

