
Jesus Comes: A Youth Led Worship Service

First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Psalm: Psalm 16:1-11

Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Gospel: John 20:19-31

In the midst of our confusion, pain, sorrow, doubt and fear, Jesus comes to us. The very first Easter, the day of Jesus' victory over death, must have been a confusing one for the disciples. Jesus' friends and family have been on a roller coaster of emotions in just a few days, and through Holy Week, we have been on this journey as well. Now, after the excitement and joy of Easter morning, the disciples gather inside a house with locked doors. They are scared that the Jewish leaders who arrested and crucified Jesus might be looking for his associates. Maybe, too, they are scared of Jesus, the one they had denied and abandoned. But even locked doors cannot stop the resurrected Jesus who appears among them and offers them the gift of peace. Jesus also reminds the disciples they will be sent back out into the world: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." In the midst of their confusion, pain, sorrow, doubt and fear, Jesus comes with the gift of peace and the Holy Spirit, empowering the disciples to go out in service.

Unfortunately, Thomas was not with the rest of the group when Jesus came. Thomas wants what the rest of the disciples already got: an opportunity to see Jesus in the flesh, a chance to make sense of this holy mystery. A week later, the text tells us, Jesus comes again: showing up among the disciples even though they are again behind closed doors. Again, Jesus says to the disciples, "Peace be with you." And Thomas, having had an opportunity to see and touch Jesus, offers his own affirmation: "My Lord and my God!" Jesus then offers a blessing for those who will one day be able to believe even though they won't have the opportunity to see and touch Jesus the way Thomas did.

So much in this story rings true for the youth in our congregations. Youth experience roller coasters of emotions in their relationships with friends, family and mentors. Certainly, youth know all too well the feelings of confusion, pain, sorrow, doubt and fear; they also know joy, forgiveness, love, peace and friendship. Youth have lots of curiosity, questions, and doubt; they want to make sense of their world and how God is part of it. Like Thomas, youth need opportunities to make sense of the holy mysteries. But like Peter in the Acts 2 text, youth also have experienced enough of God to stand up and affirm their faith; they dare to proclaim what they believe, even in the midst of the questions and the chaos.

The liturgy for worship provided here should be considered a starting place. Youth should be empowered to edit or rewrite parts of the liturgy in ways that make sense to them. This is also a learning opportunity, a chance to think about each act of worship: what it is and why we do it. As you prepare for worship together, allow the voices of the youth to proclaim what they believe. And may you all trust that Jesus is there with you in the midst of your preparation, offering the gifts of peace and the Holy Spirit to guide you.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

Many: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

One: We come to worship Jesus Christ:

Many: with our fears and our doubts.

One: We come to worship Jesus Christ:

Many: with our joys and our passions.

One: We come to worship Jesus Christ:

Many: with our whole being and all that we are.

One: Jesus comes to meet us here.

Many: Let us worship the risen Christ!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Provider God,

You are always with us and offer us all that we need,

but still we are afraid to go where you send us.

Our fears and anxieties keep us locked in,

so we don't befriend the lonely, share with the hungry, and support the weak.

Instead of sharing the gifts you've given us,

we keep them to ourselves.

Instead of proclaiming the good news of your resurrection,

we hide behind the comfort of closed doors.

Forgive us, Holy God. Bless us with the ability to trust and believe.

Grant us peace that we might fulfill the mission to which you have called us,

in the name of the One who has showed us the way. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Peter proclaimed, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Peter 1:3-4a).

Sisters and brothers, the good news of the gospel is this:

Jesus Christ has made all things new, including us!

Trust and believe: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Living God, In this time of worship, breathe into us. Awaken us.

Open our eyes to see you in the word, the water, the bread, and the cup.

Open our ears to hear you in the music and in the word, read and proclaimed.

Open our hearts to trust and believe in you,

through the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

SCRIPTURE: John 20:19-31 (NRSV)

The Gospel reading could be read in a Reader's Theatre style with 3 voices (Narrator, Jesus, Thomas).

Reader 1: 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,

Reader 2: "Peace be with you."

Reader 1: After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again,

Reader 2: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Reader 1: When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

Reader 2: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Reader 1: But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them,

Reader 3: "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."

Reader 1: 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,

Reader 2: "Peace be with you."

Reader 1: Then he said to Thomas,

Reader 2: "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

Reader 1: Thomas answered him,

Reader 3: "My Lord and my God!"

Reader 1: Jesus said to him,

Reader 2: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Reader 1: Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Read Acts 2:14a, 22-32. Brainstorm responses to the following questions. From your responses, and possibly using parts of Peter's affirmation in the Acts text, create an Affirmation of Faith for the congregation to read together in worship, based on what you, collectively, believe.

- *Who is Jesus?*
- *What signs and miracles did Jesus do?*
- *Through Jesus, what did God show us?*
- *How does Jesus call us to live?*

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

May we rejoice in the gifts Jesus has given us and respond with grateful hearts and hands, offering to God the gifts of our lives and labor.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Generous God,

You provide for us all that we need, and we are grateful that you come to meet us, wherever we are.

We offer these gifts today as a sign of our love and commitment to follow you and to trust you.

May the money we offer and our hearts and hands be of service to bring peace and justice to all your children. We pray in the name of the one who sends us back out into the world. Amen.

CHARGE & BLESSING

Jesus comes to meet us with peace, but always sends us back out into the world.

We do not go alone. Receive the Holy Spirit.

Open your eyes, hands, and hearts to see where Jesus is standing among us,

and respond to others with the peace and forgiveness we have received in Christ.

May God bless and keep you, May Jesus Christ grant you peace and forgiveness, and May the Holy Spirit both comfort and challenge you in the days ahead. Amen.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Be Not Afraid (GTG #243)

Change My Heart, O God (STF #2152, GTG #695)

Christ is Alive! (PH #108, GTG #246)

Come, Great God of All the Ages (GTG #309)

Come! Live in the Light! (GTG #749)

Do Not Be Afraid (GTG #76)

God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending (PH #422, GTG #716)

I Will Come to You (You Are Mine) (STF #2218, GTG #177)

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (STF #2193, GTG #469)

I've Got Peace Like a River (PH #368, GTG #623)

Take, O Take Me as I Am (GTG #698)

Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples (PH #434, GTG #757)

Will You Come and Follow Me (STF #2130, GTG #726)

PH= The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990)

STF= Sing the Faith (2003)

GTG= Glory to God (2013)