

Sunday School Lesson

LESSON BACKGROUND

Many of Jesus' followers had seen His wounded body after His horrible beating. They had watched when He could no longer bear the weight of the cross on the way to Golgotha. They had heard the sound of the mallet driving the nails into His hands. They had watched His body swing as the cross was lifted and dropped into a hole. They had watched as His breathing became shallower and finally stopped. They had seen His head slump. They had seen the blood and water flow from His side. They had seen Him wrapped for burial and placed in a tomb. There was no doubt about it. Their beloved leader was dead.

We often hear about doubting Thomas as if he were the only apostle who doubted the resurrection. But he wasn't. All of them at first doubted. "The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; they and the other women with them told these things to the apostles. But the apostles thought that what the women said was nonsense and they did not believe them," (Luke 24:10, 11).

What changed this disbelief to belief? Jesus came to the apostles when they were meeting together on the evening of resurrection day and showed them His hands and side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord, (John 20:19-20).

However, Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus met with them (John 20:24). The other disciples told Thomas they had seen Jesus, but Thomas didn't believe the report (John 20:25). But let's not condemn him for that. Neither had the other disciples believed reports of Jesus' resurrection until they had seen His hands and side. Thomas only asked for the same evidence that had convinced them. He didn't doubt more than they had, but in the same way they had.

THE LESSON

"A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting and believe!' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:26-28).

It is interesting that the disciples did not criticize Thomas. They did not turn their backs on him. Apparently there were no under-the-breath comments or raised eyebrows to make him feel unwelcome. These men had been through a lot and would not permit Thomas' present skepticism to drive a wedge between them. Thomas was a part of the fellowship - without guilt.

Thomas was willing to stand up against the crowd. He was honest. If he had said he believed the reports of the resurrection when he didn't, just to fit into the group, he would have been wishy-washy later.

Like the disciples, we need to be patient with each other. Thomas felt comfortable expressing his doubts. Do we? Dialogue among Christians is important; we should strive to increase it. But in order for that to take place, each must have proper respect for the thoughts and feelings of others. Getting our doubts and questions out helps us to help each other. This is what happened to Thomas. Jesus himself came to him and provided the evidence that was needed to resolve his doubts and establish his belief. Jesus took time to offer Thomas what Thomas needed. If Jesus was not too busy or proud to do that for Thomas, then neither should we be for those among us who are searching for answers. Jesus encouraged investigation and so should we. If we have the truth, it can stand the most rigorous inspection.

"After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Take care of my lambs.' A second time Jesus said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love Me?' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Take care of my sheep.'" A third time Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter became sad because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and so he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Take care of my sheep. I am telling you the truth: when you were young, you used to get ready and go anywhere you wanted to; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you up and take you where you don't want to go.'" (In saying this, Jesus was indicating the way in which Peter would die and bring glory to God.) Then Jesus said to him, "Follow me!" Peter turned around and saw behind him that other disciple whom Jesus loved - the one who had leaned close to Jesus at the meal and had asked, "Lord who is going to betray you?" When Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus answered him, "If I want him to live until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"

Some Bible scholars suggest that Peter didn't really answer Jesus' precise questions. The first two times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, the word he used for love was agapao. Each time Peter answered, the word for love that he used was phileo. The love indicated by the word agapao is intelligent goodwill toward another, which carries the idea of purpose and wholehearted devotion. It means creative and redemptive goodwill. Phileo, on the other hand, designates a warm more personal attachment, such as exists between friends or in the family circle. The first two times Jesus couldn't get Peter to answer with agapao, so he used phileo the third time.

Others may ask why the three questions and three answers, "I love you." Some have said that this was done by our Lord, in His grace, to give Peter a chance to say publicly, "I love you," as a counterbalance to the three times he had denied Jesus. That's the kind of thing we would expect Jesus to do. He doesn't lock us up into our past positions or statements. He understands our situations and wants us to be open to change. God's grace is so much greater than man's disgrace.

We can all rejoice that God did not cover up the "Watergate" of His people.

Recognition Banquet To Highlight Celebration Honoring Dr. Riddick

Dr. Leon C. Riddick, pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, will be honored on Sunday, April 21, in recognition of his 50 years in the ministry.

The highlight of the day's activities will be a recognition banquet at 7 p.m. at the Convention Center. Friends and colleagues from throughout the state and nation will be present to participate in the program and music will be provided by the Sanctuary Choir and Male Chorus of Mount Carmel. The community is invited to join in the celebration. Reservations (\$10 per person) can be made by calling the church office at 394-3525.

Since coming to Charlotte 20 years ago, Dr. Riddick has been a viable force in the community, working quietly to improve race relations through the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee; providing services to the deaf, the elderly, the incarcerated and other groups through the church's outreach ministries; providing housing for low income residents in the Biddleville community in a cooperative venture with Gethsemane AME Zion Church; organizing a seminary extension school through Shaw University for local ministers who wanted to continue their education but were unable to travel great distances to school; setting up a day care center at Mount Carmel and encouraging a strong youth department through the church; working with the Red Cross, Crisis Assistance Ministry and other community agencies to bring services into the communities where they are needed or to make residents aware of the services that are available to them. Mount Carmel, in its own outreach ministry, provided sustenance to many individuals in the surrounding Enderly Park community and throughout Charlotte during the winter months - whether they were members of the congregation or not.

Because of his strong commitment and his efforts to make life better for so many, the Mount Carmel congregation wanted to say "Thank you" to Rev. Riddick, said Mildred Johnson, co-chairperson of the recognition day. The theme for the occasion, "A Century and A Decade" encompasses Rev. Riddick's 50 years in the ministry, 40 years of



Dr. Leon C. Riddick  
.....50 years in the ministry

marriage to his wife, Mickie, and 20 years at Mount Carmel.

In addition to the services Mount Carmel provides locally, the church also supports a school and nutrition center in Haiti and ranks number one in missions giving in the General Baptist Convention in North Carolina. Because of his influence and work in the Baptist Convention and other state and national organizations, many of his colleagues will celebrate the occasion with Dr. and Mrs. Riddick.

If you want to attend the recognition banquet, call the church for more information or to make your reservations. The number is 394-3525.

Johnson C. Smith To Host Health Fair

The Johnson C. Smith University Student Health Care Center will be hosting a Health Fair on Wednesday, April 16, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The Health Fair is open to the public and will be held in the Liston Hall Dormitory Study Lounge. Free health screening, testing and general information will be available.

Joan Fraser, director of the Johnson C. Smith University Student Health Center, said, "This Health Fair is another way of involving our community in university activities. We feel our health center is going to play a vital role in our community's future and activities such as this will lead the way in this endeavor."

Participating agencies for the Health Fair will be: Mecklenburg County Health Department; Community Health Association; Charlotte Council on Alcoholism; Charlotte Drug Education Center; American Heart Association; American

St. Phillip Baptist

Continued From Page 6A minister of Mt. Olive Baptist Church; Thursday, Rev. Larry Hill, pastor of Catawba Presbyterian Church; and Friday night, Rev. Don Steger, pastor of Reeder Memorial Baptist.

The public is cordially invited to attend. Proceeds will benefit various nursing homes.

UNIVERSITY PARK At 5:30 p.m., April 21, be sure to tune into WGIV to hear the Young Adult Anniversary program. Local choirs will render selections. Choirs include the New St. John's Voices of Paradise, Clinton Chapel's Young Adults and many more talented and spiritual-minded groups.

University Park Baptist, located on the corner of Keller and Senior Dr., is pastored by Rev. Dr. James E. Palmer.

BIG SPRING UNITED METHODIST The Young Adult "Genesis" Class of Big Spring United Methodist Church will sponsor an attic sale Saturday, April 20, from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The church is located near the corner of Billy Graham Parkway and Old Dowd Rd., 5300 Old Dowd Rd.

For more details, contact Emily C. Conner, weekdays, at 392-6191.

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Prices Good At All Family Dollar Stores Through This Weekend. Quantities Limited On Some Items. No sales To Dealers.

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