

# EASTER 2019, PART I: LIVING

## SERIES OVERVIEW

Easter is more than just a day. It is a 50-day season that marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the ways we live into that reality, just as his disciples did. The season of Easter has long been a time when newcomers to Christianity and those already on the Christian journey revisit the foundations of the faith. In other words, this is a time when people examine basic doctrines, providing, as Laurence Hull Stookey writes, “a time for both discovery and reconsideration.”[1] As a result, our resources will culminate in two four-week series—“Living” and “Loving”—that will focus upon the gospel narratives and ways to integrate these doctrinal pieces into daily Christian living.

This first series begins with Easter Day, which serves as the hinge point between the Lenten and Easter series. All of the Scriptures are included for this day, but the Scripture passages for the following Sundays are all contained in the Gospel of John. The narratives are post-resurrection accounts (Week 2: Jesus and Thomas; Week 3: Breakfast with the disciples), with the exception of Week 4, in which we observe what is often referred to as “Good Shepherd” Sunday.

One possible thread to examine is determining how all these actions merge into the greater action of living as a witness of the risen Christ. How do believing, following, and listening intersect to form a way of discipleship in which we confidently share the good news of resurrection? Resurrection is a daily reality, and we live as those marked by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. According to the pattern in the lectionary, we encounter a unique process, which, interestingly enough, might be the opposite of the way we often consider our faith:

*Step 1: Believe (Two Sundays are centered on believing!)*

*Step 2: Follow*

*Step 3: Listen*

**Week 1: Easter Day**

**April 21**

**Believing**

[Acts 10:34-43](#)

[Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:19-26](#)

[John 20:1-18](#)

<b>Week 2: Second Sunday of Easter</b> <a href="#"><u>John 20:19-31</u></a>	<b>April 28</b>	<b>Believe in Me</b>
<b>Week 3: Third Sunday of Easter</b> <a href="#"><u>John 21:1-19</u></a>	<b>May 5</b>	<b>Follow Me</b>
<b>Week 4: Fourth Sunday of Easter</b> <a href="#"><u>John 10:22-30</u></a>	<b>May 12</b>	<b>Listen to Me</b>

\*All scripture quotations are NRSV.

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[1] Laurence Hull Stookey, *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996), 59.

Living  
**EASTER SUNDAY: Believing**  
Easter Sunday, Year C  
April 21, 2019

**PLANNING NOTES**  
**Reading Notes**

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectioinaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

**Calendar Notes**

April

- April 14 Palm/Passion Sunday
- April 14-20 Holy Week
- April 18 Maundy Thursday
- April 19 Good Friday
- April 20 Holy Saturday
- April 21 Easter Sunday
- April 24 [Festival of God's Creation](#)
- April 25 [World Malaria Day \(UM Communications\)](#)

May

- All Month Christian Home Month
- All Month Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
- May 1 Older Adult Recognition Day
- May 2 National Day of Prayer
- May 3 May Friendship Day
- May 5 Native American Ministries Sunday
- May 12 [Mother's Day \(USA\)](#)/Festival of the Christian Home
- May 18-19 [Change the World Weekend](#)
- May 19 [Heritage Sunday](#)
- May 24 Aldersgate Day
- May 27 [Memorial Day \(USA\)](#)
- May 30 Ascension of the Lord

June

<b>June 2</b>	<b>Ascension of the Lord Sunday</b>
<b>June 9</b>	<b>Pentecost</b>
<b>June 16</b>	<b>Trinity Sunday</b>
<b>June 16</b>	<b>Peace with Justice Sunday</b>
<b>June 16</b>	<b>Father's Day</b>
<b>June 19</b>	<b>Juneteenth</b>

### **Planning for This Series**

Some pastors prefer to do Lent as a full series and start anew on Easter Sunday. The “Living” series allows for an Easter Sunday start and runs for four weeks. It is followed by the four-week “Loving” series. Both series focus on living as Christians.

Historically, Lent was used as a season of preparation and discipleship for interested Christians, and they would be baptized at the Easter vigil service. The season after Easter, then, was focused on teaching Christian doctrine. Our “Living” and “Loving” series come out of this historical understanding of the Easter season. They both follow the gospel texts in John, where Jesus is trying to teach the disciples how to live as his followers. You can ask the same questions in your worship: “What does it mean to live as a follower of Christ? What does it mean to believe in Jesus?”

In planning for Easter Sunday morning, despite it being the third Sunday of the month and having special programmed music, honoring the Risen Lord cries out for the celebration of Holy Communion. As Taylor Burton-Edwards wrote, “No musical extravaganza and no sermon can possibly take the place or should displace the fullest celebration of the living presence of our Risen Lord in body and blood.”

If you are finishing the Lent series “With All Your Heart” through Easter Sunday, go ahead and jump into the “Living” series on April 28. A three-week “Living” series will work just as well.

## **PREACHING NOTES**

[Acts 10:34-43](#)

[Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:19-26](#)

[John 20:1-18](#)

**To Live for Jesus, One Must Believe in Jesus and All Jesus Is**

### ***Points to Explore:***

#### *What Does this All Mean?*

The scene begins with an empty tomb and disciples trying to figure out what that means. Mary runs to Simon Peter and the other disciple with two pieces of information: the stone was removed, and Jesus' body is not in the tomb. She concludes that the body was taken and put somewhere else. Peter and the other disciple get more information. The linen cloths that had wrapped Jesus' body were still there. Thieves stealing the body would not have left the cloths. But what does that mean? The other disciple enters the tomb, sees the cloths but no body, and believes. We assume we know what he believed, but the text is not clear that he believed in a resurrected Jesus. Instead, verse 9 states that they didn't yet understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Peter and the other disciple return home with incomplete information. Mary Magdalene stays and sits in her state of not knowing what this means and where the body is until Jesus reveals the full story. She speaks to angels and Jesus himself without recognizing him, and still asserts the wrong conclusion. The empty tomb could mean many things; it is the encounter with Jesus that allows Mary and us to know about the resurrection and what that means.

#### *Finding Life in a Place of Death*

I once worshiped at a church that had its Easter egg hunt in the cemetery across the street. Church members explained that the eggs were symbols of life, so church members wanted the children to find life surrounded by death. I found it both creepy and liturgically appropriate. Many parts of American culture have certainly sanitized death in a way that we would not understand going to the tomb before dawn. However, as was the custom of the women, they went to the tomb to prepare the body that had been buried in haste. And in this place of death, Mary Magdalene witnessed life. She expected to see a dead body, only to—at first—not see a body, then to realize that what she had thought was a missing body was actually a living body. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we are assured that because Jesus conquered death and rose from the dead, we are able to live after death.

The resurrection of Jesus is a key doctrine of the Christian faith. It is sensational and one of the hardest things to get our heads around. Death is meant to end life; life is not meant to come from death. Yet, we proclaim that a dead man got up from the grave. To live for Christ also

means that we recognize what it means to live without the fear of death or with a sense of uncertainty of what happens after death. We know that death will come. We may not want it or look forward to it because it is *an* end. But we are able to be less afraid, for we know that death is not *the* end. There is life after death.

### *When Jesus Calls Your Name: The Intimacy of Discipleship*

Mary has a conversation with someone she thought was the gardener for quite some time before realizing that she was talking to Jesus. She recognized that it was Jesus when Jesus called her name. This portrays the power of an intimate relationship. John's Gospel also shows intimacy by the description of the disciples. Peter's role in this gospel is multifaceted. He confesses faith, is shown to be a leader, and is overly enthusiastic. While he often jumps to the incorrect conclusion, this is a mark of his passion to serve Jesus and do what is right by him. The disciple "whom Jesus loved" shows relationship. It is not that this is the only disciple that Jesus loved, but that a major goal of discipleship is to recognize that we are loved by Jesus and to cultivate our relationship with the Christ that knows us and loves us intimately so that we can recognize his voice and know him when he calls our name.

### *Go and Tell*

Jesus' first command as the risen savior is to go and tell others. And that is exactly what Mary did. After Mary, others did as well; and we see this in the reading from Acts 10. Peter preaches about the risen Savior in verse 40, "but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen." He continues in verse 42, "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead." The news of the risen savior is such great news that we cannot keep it to ourselves. We do a disservice to the world if we keep it to ourselves.

### ***Questions for Reflection:***

- Over two millennia after these events took place, there are still many takes on what this story means. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for you? What impact does it have on the way that you live your life?

- We can have a sense of what's going on that's a little off the mark. We expect Jesus to look a particular way and move in a particular way. Who and what are you looking for when you look for the movement of Christ, and how will you know when you have found it?
- Peter shared the story of the risen Christ by preaching. Paul shared it through the written word. Mother Teresa shared it through caring for the poor. St. Augustine said, "preach the gospel always; when necessary, use words." How are you called to share the good news of the risen Christ?

*Rev. Annie Lockhart-Gilroy, PhD is Assistant Professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, OK. She has served several congregations as a deacon focusing on youth ministry and Christian education. She received her M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, then worked with and directed a faith-based nonprofit before attaining her Ph.D. in Christian Education and Congregational Studies from Garrett-Evangelical Theological School. She publishes on various topics surrounding education and adolescent spirituality through blogs, articles, and scholarly publications.*

## **GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES**

### Articles and Resources

- [ACTS OF WORSHIP FOR HOLY WEEK](#)
- [PRAYERS AND COLLECTS FOR LENT AND HOLY WEEK](#)
- **Easter Sunrise Service**
- [Easter Sunday Greeting](#)
- [THE GREAT THANKSGIVING FOR EASTER DAY OR SEASON](#)
- [Morning Has Broken: Easter Call to Worship](#)
- [Celebration and Thanksgiving on Easter Sunday Morning: A Pastoral Prayer](#)
- [A Poem For Easter](#)
- [Handbell Music for Lent and Easter](#)
- [I Have Seen the Lord](#)
- [Bilingual Easter Sunday Service \(Korean and English\)](#)
- [Plan Easter for C.M.E. People](#)
- [Two Litanies Based on Psalm 118: A 21st Century Liturgy Resource](#)

- [Prayer of Great Thanksgiving for the Easter Season](#)

Seasonal/Secular

- [Festival of God's Creation](#)

Offertory Prayer

Coming soon

Graphics Downloads

Coming soon

**Living**  
**EASTER 2: Believe in Me**  
**Second Sunday in Easter, Year C**  
**April 28, 2019**

**PLANNING NOTES**  
**Reading Notes**

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectionnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

**Calendar Notes**

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- April 20** Holy Saturday
- April 21** Easter Sunday
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- April 25** [World Malaria Day \(UM Communications\)](#)

**May**

- All Month** Christian Home Month
- All Month** Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
- May 1** Older Adult Recognition Day
- May 2** National Day of Prayer
- May 3** May Friendship Day
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- May 12** [Mother's Day \(USA\)](#)/Festival of the Christian Home
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- May 27** [Memorial Day \(USA\)](#)
- May 30** Ascension of the Lord

## June

June 2	Ascension of the Lord Sunday
June 9	Pentecost
June 16	Trinity Sunday
June 16	Peace with Justice Sunday
June 16	Father's Day
June 19	Juneteenth

### Planning for This Series

Historically, Lent was used as a season of preparation and discipleship for interested Christians, and they would be baptized at the Easter vigil service. The season after Easter, then, was focused on teaching Christian doctrine. Our “Living” and “Loving” series come out of this historical understanding of the Easter season. They both follow the gospel texts in John, where Jesus is trying to teach the disciples how to live as his followers. You can ask the same questions in your worship: “What does it mean to live as a follower of Christ? What does it mean to believe in Jesus?”

In your worship space, remember that we are still in the celebratory season of Easter, and your space and colors can reflect that! White and gold are the official liturgical colors for this season, but it is also spring in the northern hemisphere, or fall in the southern hemisphere. You may want your space to reflect the colors and life outside your windows.

### PREACHING NOTES

#### [John 20:19-31](#)

#### **To Live for Jesus is to Believe in Him**

##### ***Points to Explore:***

*The presence of Jesus is the Presence of Peace.*

Jesus arrives among a group of disciples who are scared for their lives; they have every right to be. They saw their leader crucified and are concerned that they might be next. It is perfectly understandable for them to feel scared, anxious, and nervous—anything but peaceful. Then Jesus appears and states, “Peace be with you.” This ought to be seen as more than just a greeting. With Jesus, comes peace. I imagine that the disciples felt better once they saw that what was before them was not a ghost, nor a figment of imagination. Before them was Jesus; and to be in the presence of Jesus is to experience a “peace that surpasses all understanding.”

### *The Peace of Jesus Brings Power and Responsibility.*

After greeting them and bringing them peace, Jesus breathed on them, gave them the Holy Spirit, and then immediately gave them a task. God's peace does not mean lack of fear or anxiousness. Having received verification that their leader was still with them, and that, indeed, they served a risen and living savior, they were instructed about how their life would change. They were to live as sent people. With the power of the Holy Spirit, they were sent into the world to reconcile the world to God and to forgive.

### *Thomas Believes*

Thomas is often given a bad rep for not believing what the other disciples had told him. However, it is perfectly reasonable to not believe that a dead man has risen from the dead. To believe also presents a certain vulnerability. If one believes that a deepest desire is true, that person opens himself/herself up to a happiness that could be taken away if proven not to be true. It is understandable. However, Thomas robbed himself of a week of joy because he refused to believe the testimony of his trusted friends. Jesus did not hold it against Thomas. Instead Jesus gave Thomas what he needed so he could believe. Jesus gives make-up tests. We don't miss out because we don't believe when others believe. Jesus meets us where are. Jesus also spoke to Thomas in a way that did not focus on his doubt, but that was meant to move Thomas to belief. And Thomas believed. This belief then moved him to make a strong confession. To say "My Lord and my God" is to recognize the divinity of Christ and to recognize that Jesus is one with God. Thomas' belief moved him to make a powerful confession of who Jesus is.

*"Blessed are those who have not seen but have come to believe."*

I have never seen the human, historical Jesus. Yet, it does not mean that my belief hasn't been helped by seeing and believing. I saw the work and life of Franciscan nuns and other Christian believers. Seeing them helped me believe in a historical Jesus whose form I do not see. But I do see Jesus in other ways. May we be blessed because we believe, though we do not see!

### *A Word of Warning*

“Fear of the Jews” is always a dicey statement to preach, and the way that this is preached can either provide clarification or anti-Semitic rhetoric. It is important to remember that the disciples in that room were all Jews, just like Jesus. The Johannine community, however, were majority Gentile Christians. While the disciples were afraid, this was not a matter of fearing all Jewish people because they were wicked or evil people. The disciples feared the Jewish and Roman authorities who had conspired to crucify Jesus. They feared those authorities because they feared that they could be next. That is a justified and specific fear that ought not be preached like a general fear.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- What event or series of events made you a believer? How can you connect to those moments in difficult times of unbelief?
- When you gather on the first day of the week, like the disciples did in this passage, what is your purpose for gathering? Do you expect Jesus to show up?
- Now that we have the peace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, what action(s) are we being called to do?
- In what ways can you live your life as proof to others that Christ is alive?

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## **GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES**

### Articles and Resources

- [21st Century Resources for the Second Sunday of Easter, Year C](#)

- [A New Great Thanksgiving for Eastertide](#)
- [Prayer of Great Thanksgiving for the Easter Season](#)
- [Easter Series 2016: A Focus on Our Baptismal Vows and the Book of Acts](#)
- [Planning Worship for Eastertide, Year C](#)
- [Resources in the UM Book of Worship](#)

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads

**Living**  
**EASTER 3: Follow Me**  
**Third Sunday in Easter, Year C**  
**May 5, 2019**

**PLANNING NOTES**

**Reading Notes**

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectonnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

**Calendar Notes**

**May**

<b>All Month</b>	<b>Christian Home Month</b>
<b>All Month</b>	<b>Asian Pacific American Heritage Month</b>
<b>May 1</b>	<b>Older Adult Recognition Day</b>
<b>May 2</b>	<b>National Day of Prayer</b>
<b>May 3</b>	<b>May Friendship Day</b>
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<b>May 12</b>	<b><a href="#">Mother's Day (USA)</a>/Festival of the Christian Home</b>
<b>May 18-19</b>	<b><a href="#">Change the World Weekend</a></b>
<b>May 19</b>	<b><a href="#">Heritage Sunday</a></b>
<b>May 24</b>	<b>Aldersgate Day</b>
<b>May 27</b>	<b><a href="#">Memorial Day (USA)</a></b>
<b>May 30</b>	<b>Ascension of the Lord</b>

**June**

<b>June 2</b>	<b>Ascension of the Lord Sunday</b>
<b>June 9</b>	<b>Pentecost</b>
<b>June 16</b>	<b>Trinity Sunday</b>
<b>June 16</b>	<b><a href="#">Peace with Justice Sunday</a></b>
<b>June 16</b>	<b>Father's Day</b>
<b>June 19</b>	<b>Juneteenth</b>

**Planning for This Series**

Historically, Lent was used as a season of preparation and discipleship for interested Christians, and they would be baptized at the Easter vigil service. The season after Easter, then, was focused on teaching Christian doctrine. Our “Living” and “Loving” series come out of this historical understanding of the Easter season. They both follow the gospel texts in John, where Jesus is trying to teach the disciples how to live as his followers. You can ask the same questions in your worship: “What does it mean to live as a follower of Christ? What does it mean to believe in Jesus?”

Today is Native American Ministries Sunday, one of the six denomination-wide Special Sundays that includes a special offering. Discipleship Ministries has [worship resources](#) to support your observance of this Sunday. If you do not have Native American persons regularly involved with planning and leading worship, do not try to imitate Native American worship practices. Instead, if you choose to do so, partner with Native American leadership or organizations in your community.

## PREACHING NOTES

### [John 21:1-19](#)

#### To Live For Jesus is to Follow Jesus

##### ***Points to Explore***

##### *Echoes of the initial call*

The first half of this story tells of a miraculous catch of fish. It is similar to a story as told in Luke 5:1-11 as part of the call of the disciples. In both stories we see the disciples, having fished all night and caught nothing. We see Jesus telling the disciples at dawn to cast their nets. As experienced fishermen, the disciples know that fish are most easily caught in the quiet of the night, not the hustle and bustle of the beginning of day. Yet the disciples listen to Jesus and catch an abundance of fish. We see Jesus inviting the disciples to follow him. In this post-resurrection telling, this story can be seen as an updated call. Now that Jesus is risen, the call is different. They have a better sense of the ministry and what it means to follow and serve Jesus without Jesus being physically present with them. Instead of being taught by Jesus, they are now called to teach and to live into what they have been taught. This is a new phase of their call and ministry.

##### *Recognizing Jesus*

In the stories of Jesus seeing his disciples after the resurrection, several times we see Jesus having conversations with his disciples without them recognizing him—at least not right away. They don’t recognize him until he does something familiar. For Mary, it was when Jesus called her name. For the disciples on the Road to Emmaus in Luke’s Gospel, it was when Jesus broke

the bread as he had done on the night of the Last Supper. And for Peter, James, and John, it was when Jesus led them to this miraculous catch.

Sometimes we are so preoccupied, we miss the movement of Jesus that is right in front of us. Maybe it is because he doesn't look the way we think he would. Maybe it is because we don't expect to see him work. We don't always recognize Jesus, but Jesus knows how to make himself familiar to his disciples. It isn't the same for everyone, but he knows us so well that it can be custom-made.

### *Three confessions of Love & Three Commands*

Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Jesus. Peter is hurt that Jesus would ask three times, as if Peter were not telling the truth. Peter responds that Jesus knows everything and therefore knows that Peter loves him. Jesus does indeed know. It may have been Peter that needed to be reminded. I imagine that Peter is still feeling the guilt of denying Jesus three times at the time of his trial. Yet each denial is matched now with an opportunity to confess his love.

Jesus responds to Peter with three similar commands: "Feed My lambs, Tend My sheep, and Feed My sheep." Jesus calls us to care for all of those that he loves. We must recognize that we are called to care for all. Throughout Scripture, we see that loving God and loving neighbor are inextricable actions. One cannot love God if one does not love neighbor, for one's neighbor is also of God. God loves them as much as God loves you. So, you care for them because God loves them, and they, too, belong to God. Love is an action verb. It is not enough to say that the other people know that they are loved. Love must be followed with action.

### *Following the Risen Christ*

The disciples had already been following Christ for years. Yet, Jesus commands again, "Follow me." But unlike before, they do not get to follow Jesus in the literal way. Jesus will no longer be with them in person. They don't get to touch him or hear him in the same way. This is a new way of following Jesus. We follow his teachings and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry on his work, even though he is no longer physically on earth. This is the general invitation to discipleship that Jesus makes to us: follow and be a member of his flock. To live for Jesus is to follow Jesus.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- Jesus makes himself known to people in various ways. How does Jesus move in your life in such a way that you know it is the movement of God's Spirit?
- We are continually being called by Jesus. Where have you been called by Jesus to go? What is God calling you to do now?

- Simon is asked to show his love for Jesus by feeding and tending his sheep. In what ways do you tend and feed Jesus' flock because you love him? Which portion of Jesus' flock do you concentrate on?
- Jesus cares for them and cooks for them and eats with them and spends some time just being with them. How often do you take time to just be in Jesus' presence? Not asking or even working for, but fellowshiping and simply being?

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## **GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES**

### Articles and Resources

- [Call to Worship: Lord Save Us from Ourselves \(Based on John 21:1-19\)](#)
- [A New Great Thanksgiving for Eastertide](#)
- [Easter Series 2016: A Focus on Our Baptismal Vows and the Book of Acts](#)
- [Planning Worship for Eastertide, Year C](#)
- [THE GREAT THANKSGIVING FOR EASTER DAY OR SEASON](#)
- [Contemporary Service of Holy Communion](#)

### Seasonal/Secular

- [Native American Ministries Sunday Resources \(from umcgiving.org\)](#)
- [Native American Ministries Sunday](#)
- [21st Century Worship Resources for Native American Ministries Sunday](#)
- [A Native American Celebration of Holy Communion](#)

### Offertory Prayer

### Graphics Downloads

**Living**  
**EASTER 4: Listen to Me**  
**Fourth Sunday in Easter, Year C**  
**May 12, 2019**

**PLANNING NOTES**

**Reading Notes**

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

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<b>May 30</b>	<b>Ascension of the Lord</b>

**June**

<b>June 2</b>	<b>Ascension of the Lord Sunday</b>
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This is the final week of the “Living” series, so be sure to let your congregation know where you are headed next week. Our next series is “Loving,” and it ends on the day of Pentecost, when we as disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit and sent forth. After Pentecost will begin a new season of Ordinary Time.

## PREACHING NOTES

### [John 10:22-30](#)

#### To Live for Jesus is to Listen to Jesus

##### ***Points to Explore***

##### *Hearing the Answers to Our Questions*

Jesus does not always answer the questions the way we want. People gather around Jesus and demand that he tell them, plainly if he is the Messiah. Jesus replies that he has already told them, but they did not believe. This might appear to be a mere “he said/they said” situation, where recall of particular events differs from person to person. However, what seems to be happening here is that those questioning Jesus are looking for a particular type of answer and Jesus is not giving it to them. It is not that Jesus has not answered the question, but Jesus did not answer the question in the way that they expected to hear it. In order to hear Jesus’ answers to our questions, we need to let go of what we want to hear and listen to what Jesus is saying.

##### *The Power of Actions*

Jesus also replies, “The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me; but you do not believe.” Those questioning Jesus perhaps wanted a yes or no. Jesus, however, notes that his actions have been clear and plain. The things that Jesus is able to do come not from human power but divine power. Jesus is reminding us that how we behave speaks as loudly (and sometimes more loudly) as what we say. God and Jesus are also united through Jesus’ actions. Because Jesus was doing what God had sent him to do, the work of Jesus cannot be separated from the work of God.

##### *We Belong to God*

Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God has claimed us. We belong to God, and no one can change that. That, of course, does not mean that discipleship is an easy road. Jesus often describes it to the contrary. But it does mean that we know where that road ends. And we know that we have the power of the Holy Spirit to help us walk that road. We also know that this is not because of who we are, but whose we are and who Jesus is. To believe in Jesus is also to belong to those who hear his voice. And no one can take away who we are in Christ.

As Jesus continues to speak, he finds a way to assert that although they may not be sure of his identity, he is. And while we ought to believe in Jesus, Jesus does not cease to be Jesus if we do not believe. No one can take away what the Father has given to Jesus, and no one can take away what God has given to us. Whatever our call, gifts, or particular identity in Christ, they are likely to be mocked or disbelieved or belittled. No matter how often this happens, our calls, gifts, and identity never cease to exist.

### *Jesus' Identity*

At the heart of this text is the question of Jesus' identity. Who is this man? Those who came to him wanted to know if he was the Messiah. It is not clear why they were asking this question. It is not clear if they heard others say this about him, whether he had said it in some way about himself, or whether those who were asking were hoping that he would be. Whatever the reason, the identity of Jesus is of crucial importance, because the Messiah carries a particular authority that someone who is not the Messiah—but a good teacher and leader—does not. In this text, Jesus responds that he has already answered the question. On this side of the resurrection, Christians are content that the answer to this question is a resounding “yes.” Jesus is the Messiah. What that means leads us to another round of questions that theologians have been giving answers to for centuries. Jesus focuses on being one with God—its meaning also debated. But what we can say that we know for sure is that Jesus is more than a good teacher, leader, or miracle worker. Jesus' connection with God is different from the connection that God has with other humans. The unity of God and Jesus also makes Jesus one who is worthy and deserving of our praise, worship, and lifelong devotion.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- What do your works communicate about your identity and discipleship? In what ways do your works and actions show others what your call from God is?
- Jesus states that his sheep hear Jesus' voice. It isn't the same for everyone. In what ways do you hear God's voice?
- Although Jesus' detractors have been told the truth, they did not comprehend. Sometimes we do not believe what we hear because it sounds too good to be true or too big. Are there things that God has communicated with you that you have chosen not to believe? What is it about this wonderful thing that scares you away from believing it to be

true?

*Rev. Annie Lockhart-Gilroy, PhD is Assistant Professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, OK. She has served several congregations as a deacon focusing on youth ministry and Christian education. She received her M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, then worked with and directed a faith-based nonprofit before attaining her Ph.D. in Christian Education and Congregational Studies from Garrett-Evangelical Theological School. She publishes on various topics surrounding education and adolescent spirituality through blogs, articles, and scholarly publications.*

## **GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES**

### Articles and Resources

- [21st Century Worship Resources for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year C](#)
- [A New Great Thanksgiving for Eastertide](#)
- [Easter Series 2016: A Focus on Our Baptismal Vows and the Book of Acts](#)
- [Planning Worship for Eastertide, Year C](#)
- [THE GREAT THANKSGIVING FOR EASTER DAY OR SEASON](#)
- [Prayer of Great Thanksgiving for the Easter Season](#)

### Seasonal/Secular

- [Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day](#)

### Offertory Prayer

### Graphics Downloads