

**WEEK #1 – JOURNEY OF HARMONY  
April 13 – April 19, 2009**

**MONDAY – April 13<sup>th</sup>**

**CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: May I have fellowship...with the Father and his Son.**

*Risen Lord, I come before you in this Easter season to join in harmony with my brothers and sisters in your body. May this resurrection journey lead to better understanding and unity with all your children. Work in my heart to find fellowship with you as I continue to celebrate your resurrection and its significance in my life. In your risen name, I pray. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE: 1 John 1:1-4**

**KEY VERSE: 1 John 1:3:**

***“...we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (NRSV).***

A new season, a new journey and a fresh look at the risen Lord brings new meaning into our faith journey. Yesterday we celebrated the resurrection with great joy. We rejoice with the Lord that his pain is ended and his victory over sin and death is complete. Though his victory is won, there is still much which needs to be done here on earth. The key to the accomplishment of the tasks which lie ahead is in the love which Christ exhibited to us and commanded us to hold for one another. Only by loving one another the way Jesus loved and loves us can we live in harmony with God and with one another. As long as we continue to live selfish and irresponsible lives, the peace and harmony of the kingdom of heaven will continue to elude us. During the next seven weeks we will look at the visits of Jesus to the disciples after the resurrection, some of the early teachings and actions of the disciples, soon to be called apostles and the deeper meaning behind them. The victory is won, but we still have not claimed its power in our lives and in the world. We have been called to be witnesses by word and deed and the love which we exhibit to the world is the most telling of all.

We have been taught that Jesus did all that needs to be done for our salvation to the point that we believe that there are no tasks left for us to do. There is an element of truth to this because we cannot affect our salvation by our actions. Jesus paid the price for our salvation on the cross and the resurrection signals our own eternal life in Christ. However, we were given some tasks of our own, not to earn our salvation but to bring it to others. We were also commanded to love one another as Christ loved us and that kind of sacrificial love is something we find very difficult to exhibit. This week's opening thought is harmony. The fellowship our key scripture voices is about having harmony with God and with one another. The things which the writer declares to us from his experience is given so that we might have fellowship, or harmony, if you will, with the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and also with one another. It is Christ's sacrificial love, a love which places the needs of others before himself, is the answer to the disharmony which rules here on earth. If we who have received Christ's love and accepted his gifts choose not to live lives filled with this love, who will? How will the world know what is available through Christ, if those of us who have experienced it do not share it? This Easter season is a time of preparation for the lifelong witness of loving harmony to come, one which will last for eternity.

The disciples were commanded to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit which came at Pentecost. That time was spent in prayer and sharing with one another what they had seen

and heard and learned during the time they spent with Jesus. Once the Holy Spirit descended upon them in power, they would no longer stay together as a group, but would scatter in order to tell others what they had witnessed and learned. These few weeks were all they had to prepare them for the task ahead. Let us use this time wisely to prepare our hearts to become witnesses to the power of Christ's love and to begin sharing the sacrificial love with which Christ fills our hearts if we but open ourselves to receive. We won't become perfect in love over night, or perhaps ever, but we can become more loving each day so that Christ's love is spread throughout the world and the fellowship of the Father and of his Son, Jesus the Christ can bring harmony to the whole world. We take the first step upon that journey today. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: John 13:34-35; 14:15-27**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. What do I believe is the reason for the Easter season?
2. How can I be more loving like Christ? Do I need help?
3. What can I do today to promote harmony in the world? What do I need from Christ to do accomplish this?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

1. Make a list of people with whom you wish to share more of Christ's love.
2. Do something special today for someone on your list out of love for him or her.
3. Make a sacrifice (time, money, energy, emotion, etc.) today for someone else.

*Dearest and most loving Savior, I long to become more loving like you. May my actions and words today bring harmony through your love. Help me to touch someone with your love in a meaningful way as I begin the resurrection journey. May I learn how to declare to others what you have done for me and for them. In your redeeming love, I pray. Amen.*

**TUESDAY – April 14<sup>th</sup>**

**CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: When I am afraid...bring me peace.**

*Risen Savior, who brought peace in your wake, be with me today. Fill my heart with peace to overcome the fears which would keep me from walking in your paths. When fear would overwhelm me, let peace remember your love so that I may serve you better. As we walk together on this resurrection journey, let me learn more of your peace and love. In your peaceful and loving name, I pray. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE: John 20:19-23**

**KEY VERSE: John 20:19:**

***“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, ‘Peace be with you’” (NRSV).***

Christ had risen and the women, especially Mary Magdalene had already received the news and proclaimed it to the disciples. But, in the evening the disciples had gathered behind locked doors in fear. Had they not heard what the women told them? Or, were they still so traumatized by Christ’s crucifixion that they could not take it in? At any rate, they were gathered together with fear reigning in their hearts when Jesus stood among them. The first words Jesus spoke to them were, *“Peace be with you.”* Only a few days earlier at the last meal they shared Jesus had told them, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”* (John 14:27). Yet here they are, trembling in fear. No wonder Jesus’ first words speak peace to them. Before they can move past their fear, peace needs to conquer their hearts. Are we not a lot like the disciples, cowering in fear that we can’t do the things Jesus has asked of us? Where is the power Jesus promised and where is the strength to carry on and where is the desire that will carry us beyond what we believe we can accomplish? *“Peace be with you.”* We need to receive Christ’s peace in our hearts so that, like those first disciples, our fears may be vanquished and harmony with the Lord may take priority in our lives.

Before we can step out in faith, we need an inner peace. When that peace reigns in our hearts, we can face anything. The world around us may be collapsing and panic may be the main rule, but if we have Christ’s peace in our hearts, nothing can shake us, fear is banished, or at least kept under control and anything is possible. I have seen evidence of this in the lives of others and you probably have too. I remember a time when I was to have surgery when fear could have been the reigning factor in my life. It was not extremely serious as surgeries went, but of course, we all know that any surgery has its risks either of complications or even death in some instances. When I would think about this, I realized that I was not afraid. I had peace in my heart from the Lord that no matter what happened, I would be alright because the Lord was in charge of my life. This peace and lack of fear was a bit of a surprise to me because I was not aware that my faith had grown this strong. I’ve seen others who are facing much more serious surgeries or cancer treatments of even the knowledge that there is no treatment for their condition who have had this same peace in their hearts. They live their life in joy, even in the face of great pain and death. This peace is not something we have naturally. This is a gift from God. Jesus’ first words to his disciples following his resurrection are significant because they bring this gift to focus in their lives. They had already received this gift before the crucifixion, but they needed the reminder that peace was theirs and that the

crucifixion was not the end of the story. Yes, Jesus died. He had repeatedly told them it would happen and why, yet they had turned a blind eye on his statements. Now that he had died and been resurrected, he could bring them back into his peace so that they could become prepared for their own tasks. Christ's peace made them ready to hear and see what Christ had in mind for them. Christ's peace helps to make us ready to hear and see what Christ has in mind for us as well. That power, strength and desire I asked about earlier has its roots in Christ's peace. When we receive and live in Christ's peace within us, the world without will have less hold over us and fear will be easier to control. Christ's love will be able to reach us because we are grounded in Christ's peace. Peace on Earth begins with Christ's peace within. So, here at the beginning of our resurrection journey, let us receive the peace Christ offers and let go of the fear that would inhibit us. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

### **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: John14:25-27**

#### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. How often do I feel the peace of Christ?
2. How does it affect my day to day living?
3. How does Christ's peace within help me to bring harmony around me?

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

1. When difficult circumstances arise this week, stop and look for Christ's peace in your heart. Let this peace rule your responses to the circumstances.
2. Pray for inner peace to be in your heart as you go through the daily tasks before you.
3. Seek harmony with everyone you meet today.

*Dearest and most compassionate Lord, you knew that we would be fearful and have turmoil in our hearts. May your peace rule in my heart today as I travel the resurrection journey within my daily life. May I understand others and find peace within the circumstances of my life today. May I be a peace bringer along the way In your peaceful name, I pray. Amen.*

**WEDNESDAY – April 15<sup>th</sup>**

**CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: May unity...rule my home.**

*Holy Lord, who came to bring us union with God, be with me as I look for ways to bring unity and harmony within my home. There is no better place to be when there is unity as the family and not many worse places to be when there is discord within the home. Help me be the peacemaker in my home to foster unity with one another. In your loving and peaceful name, I pray. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE: Psalm 133**

**KEY VERSE: Psalm 133:1:**

**(12) “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity” (NRSV).**

The Psalmist is so very right when he speaks of the pleasure we have when we are living together in unity and harmony within our households. Unfortunately, many homes never know this pleasure. Discord, distrust and even violence are the rule in these homes and peace is far from them. Education and intervention can help in some cases, but having the presence of the Lord's peace is the greatest chance these homes have of finding unity and harmony. Being a peacemaker, as Matthew 5:9 blesses, means working to bring peace into situations where peace does not reign. Before we can hope to bring peace to the whole world, we must first work to bring peace into our homes. The best way to do this is to bring the risen Christ into our homes and give him priority in our lives. As we start traveling the resurrection journey, we can begin with this quest: to bring true harmony and unity into our homes through the peace which the risen Christ has offered to us all. As we spoke of yesterday, the first words Jesus spoke when he appeared to the gathered disciples were a reminder of Christ's peace given prior to the crucifixion. We need to receive those words into both our hearts, to walk in the inner peace Christ's presence in our lives can bring, and to become peacemakers to bring peace into the space around us.

Unity is a word which can be misunderstood. We often believe that in order to have unity, we must all be basically alike. Yet, Christ has brought us unity, that is, union, with the Father and himself through the Holy Spirit. We all know that we are not like Christ and the Father at this time. Yet, we have unity in that we have a loving relationship bought and paid for by our Lord Jesus Christ. Because we have received this peace, it is our task to share it with others. It has been said that if we can keep our head when all around are losing theirs, we will have true wisdom. Becoming a non-anxious person in anxious circumstances brings peace into the situation. Perhaps the hardest place to be a non-anxious person is in the midst of those to whom we are the closest, our families. I know this is true for me. I can be calm, cool and collected during a meeting in which others are full of hurt, anger and fear. But, when my mother seems upset with me or speaks a word that I perceive is mocking or angry, I fly off the handle like a crazy person. I can't seem to find that inner peace which can bring harmony between us. If I am to grow, I know that I need Christ's peace to rule me under these circumstances. Perhaps you, also, find it difficult to let Christ's peace rule in your household. If so, you are not alone. Christ has spoken peace to you and your family can also know this peace. So can mine, if I claim it in the midst of those moments when I would lose my temper or my patience. Not only can we know this peace within our own families, but we can work to help others to know it as well. Unity doesn't mean being carbon copies of one another but it does mean letting the differences bring a richness into the relationship instead of discord.

When we do so, we bring unity and a pleasant atmosphere into our homes. When we let go of the peace of Christ and lose the ability to be a non-anxious presence in our homes, harmony and unity will have little hope of surviving.

We all know of families where there is not just little harmony or unity, but where there is violence and pain. As Christians, it is an important part of our peacemaking to work to bring release for those who are caught in the abusive and crippling relationships. Such work is difficult, both to recognize and to stop the abuse and the pain such relationships engender. While it is a joy to bring peace into our own homes, it is an even greater one to be a part of the ongoing work to end domestic violence and free those who are abused and abusing. Let us call upon Christ's peace which has been given to us to work for peace in family relationships, both our own and in those which are crippling God's people. The resurrection journey will take us in many directions. Today we are traveling through the peace of the family. Help us through this way of peace. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

### **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 5:9**

#### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. How can I work for peace and unity within my family?
2. How can I become a peacemaker in my community?
3. What can I do to further bring peace into families full of abuse and violence?

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

1. Spend some special time with each member of your family in peace and joy.
2. Find out what agencies are available in your community to help victims of abuse and violence. See where you can help.
3. Learn the signs of abuse so that you can recognize when people you meet are victims. Know how to help them find the right kind of help to break the abusive cycle.

*Precious Lord, who brings peace and harmony to your people, I come to seek the means to share this with my family and my community. Work through me so that I may become the peacemaker you desire. I know that I am not filled with your peace at all times and that I do not always exhibit your peace. Make me more like you so that I may bring your peace, unity and harmony into my world starting with my own family and reaching out into the community around me. In the name of Jesus, my Savior and the Prince of peace, I pray. Amen.*

**THURSDAY – April 16<sup>th</sup>**

**CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: May my doubt...be turned to belief.**

*Dearest Lord, I believe, forgive my unbelief. There are so many times I find myself doubting the things my faith tells me is true. How I despise myself when this happens yet you forgave Thomas his doubts and I pray that you will do the same for me. Lead me into greater faith so that my doubts come less often and do not keep me from the faith you would have me to hold in my heart. In your resurrection name, I pray. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE: John 20:24-29**

**KEY VERSES: John 20:27-28**

**(27) “Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ (28) Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (NRSV).**

The first time Jesus visited the disciples while they were gathered together was quite a surprise to them, in spite of all the times he told them it would happen and the times they had witnessed him bring others back to life, such as Lazarus. So, he came among them and offered them peace to still their terror and began to prepare them for their ministry soon to begin. But, here was Thomas, practical and skeptical telling the others that “seeing is believing” and he’ll need physical evidence such as placing his fingers in the wounds of Christ’s hands and in his side before he’s gonna swallow such a wild tale! Interestingly enough, the other male disciples didn’t seem to believe the women’s account of Christ’s resurrection either, so Thomas wasn’t really all that different from the rest. He was just more vocal about it. The wonderful thing was that Jesus didn’t become angry at Thomas. Instead he patiently allowed Thomas to have his physical evidence and then blessed him! Of course, he also blessed us, who would not have the physical evidence of his resurrection, but would believe anyway.

Have you ever felt like Thomas and wanted something tangible, something physical to hang your faith upon? In Mark 9:17-27 we find a loving father has brought his son to Jesus for healing. When he asked Jesus if he could do anything, Jesus told him “*anything is possible for him who believes. Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, ‘I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!’*” (Mark 9:23b-24 NIV). I don’t know about you, but I often find myself like this father, having some belief, but needing help to overcome my doubts. Thomas was not unique in his desire for proof to put behind his belief. So, how can we overcome this problem? First, I think we need to spend more time in God’s Word learning all we can about the kingdom of God. Since Jesus spent much of his time on earth teaching about God’s kingdom, we need to avail ourselves of all the knowledge about this kingdom we can. This will strengthen our faith. Secondly, we need to understand the nature of faith. If we look at Hebrews 11:1, we will see that faith itself is the evidence we need. The author of Hebrews then goes on to list a great many who lived by faith, even though they did not see its fulfillment in Jesus, the Christ. We live in a time when faith is the subject of scorn because people want physical proof of everything. Many documentary programs are made about mysteries of the Bible, and all kinds of Biblical subjects in the interest of finding proof of the things which we believe. Although I enjoy some of these types of programs, it is important that we don’t try to lean on our own understanding and the “proof” which we humans come up with or don’t come up with. Historical evidence is not evidence for faith. Our faith comes from within, not because we have some kind of proof. I haven’t placed my hands in Christ’s wounds to believe that he was

resurrected. I have read the accounts and they are compelling, but ultimately, it is my faith which provides my need for evidence of Christ's living presence. My own experiences, though spiritual in nature, rather than physical, have given me strength in my faith. Christ's living presence with his people far outweighs any physical evidence people might discover. Do I have doubts? You bet I do. But I also have faith and it leads me in my fight to overcome the doubts. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: Mark 9:17-27; Hebrews 11**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. What doubts do I have today that need to be strengthened by faith?
2. What difference does the resurrection make in my life?
3. How does doubt help my faith to grow?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

1. Spend some time in the Bible reading passages about faith.
2. Share some time with other believers in a dialogue about doubt and faith. Share some of the doubts you have had and how your faith helped or not.

*Patient Lord, how often have I doubted something in your Word! Thank you for your patient love to bring me back to faith. When I become discouraged and doubt my faith and my ministry in your name, continue to lead me back to you through the faith you instill in my heart. Bless my stumbling efforts to grow in faith so that I might become more mature. I thank you for your love and your sacrifice, ending in the wondrous resurrection which lights the way for your children to follow. As we continue to walk along the resurrection journey, I praise your holy name in which I pray. Amen.*

FRIDAY – April 17<sup>th</sup>

**CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: Help me walk in the light...cleansed from all sin.**

*Light of the world and my life, I come to you today for your illumination for the journey. I need your light to walk the faith journey without the burden of sin. Thank you for your sacrifice, covering our sins with your own blood. And thank you for your light which illuminates our sins so that they can be banished. Help me to walk in your light so that I may have fellowship with you in ways which I have only dreamed about to this point. Teach me more of your ways as we walk together in the light, bringing fellowship with you and one another. In your awesome light and your bright name, I pray. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE: 1 John 1:5-10**

**KEY VERSES: 1 John 1:6-7:**

**(6) “If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; (7) but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (NRSV).**

Fellowship is something which we desire, both with our Lord and with one another. Often we take it for granted as something which is our due. Here we are reminded that our fellowship with God is given to those who walk with God in the light of Christ. Often we walk in darkness instead, choosing to remain in our sinful natures instead of striving to walk in the light of Christ’s teachings and commandments. We are much too prone to accept ourselves as sinners without striving to move beyond. It is so easy to accept our failures and sins as acceptable because we are “only human” and not perfect. We know that we have been forgiven and so we continue to live as we have always lived because we don’t really believe that we can do better. We have become complacent, living superficial Christians lives when there is so much more available to us when we fellowship with the Lord by walking in the light instead of the darkness. Are we deceiving ourselves into believing we have faith and salvation when we continue to walk in darkness instead of light, when we ignore the commandments of Christ and speak only of the forgiveness of Christ without the obedience of our hearts? I think there may be degrees of salvation. We all have received the life eternal which most would say is what it means to have salvation. But, Paul speaks of rewards and Christ spoke of those who say Lord, Lord but do not follow Christ’s ways and that those who do not follow his commandments do not belong to him. We have softened our allegiance to the Christ so that we no longer believe that what we do is as important as a simple statement of belief, even if that belief is never followed up with action.

This passage from 1 John reminds us that action, that is, walking in the light instead of the darkness is part of the conditions of fellowship with the Lord and with one another. Harmony with God and humans is tied up with the way we live our faith, walking in the light or in the darkness. Yesterday we talked about doubts which we have along the faith journey. Doubts can help us to grow or lead us away from our faith. When we turn to the Lord in our doubts, faith can blossom and we are better able to walk in the light. When we turn away from the Lord and trust in ourselves, doubts will flourish and faith will wither. Darkness will dominate our actions. But fellowship with the Lord and each other will not flourish in the darkness. It must be born of the light and only when we cultivate the light in our lives will the darkness recede and our steps lead us into fellowship with the Lord and each other. Walking in the light of the Lord brings us to actions which are true and just, merciful and

compassionate, loving and harmonious. Such are the actions which lead to fellowship, joy and peace. Walking in the darkness leads to selfishness, greed and discord. The resurrection journey is bathed in light. If we are to walk it with our Lord, we must leave the darkness behind. Christ gave his life for you and me, so that we might have fellowship with him. Let us walk in the light of the resurrection. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. How seriously do I take my faith journey and the actions which go along with it?
2. What darkness still dominates my faith journey that needs to be banished by Christ's light?
3. How do I seek fellowship with the Lord and with other people?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

1. Take a walk in God's beautiful world. Think about actions of light and dark which might be a part of your life during this resurrection journey. If you wish, take this walk in the company of someone with whom you would cultivate a friendship.
2. Make a list of things which are a part of your life which might not be compatible with your walk in Christ's light. Work to eliminate them one at a time.

*O, Lord of light and harmony, I seek to walk in your light rather than the darkness of the world. I know that there are things in my life which still do not relish your resurrection light. As we continue to walk together along the resurrection journey, I would ask you to help me to eliminate these dark habits and cultivate ones which will hold us in the light of your presence. In your resurrection light, I pray. Amen.*

## SATURDAY – April 18<sup>th</sup>

### **CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: Grant me grace...through the power of the resurrection.**

*God of grace and God of glory, may the power of your resurrection live on through me. Though I am but one small part of your body, let me be a witness to your power, grace and glory. As I continue to walk in the light of your resurrection, help me to share your grace with all around me. Use this time we have together to prepare me for the tasks you have prepared for me. In your powerful name, I pray. Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE: Acts 4:32-35**

#### **KEY VERSE: Acts 4:33:**

***“With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all” (NRSV).***

Though we are still in the Easter season and our scripture passage today comes after the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we find a word of the power from the resurrection. The harmony which Christ desires for his people comes from the power of the resurrection. There is more value in the resurrection than just the eternal life which is promised for his believers. The peace which Jesus spoke to his disciples when he first returned to them promises peace for all believers. The blessings he spoke to Thomas and to us who would believe after him without the benefit of physical evidence, travel down through the years because of the power of the resurrection. The Apostles gave testimony to the resurrection with great power because of the power of the resurrection in their lives. We speak of the grace, even of the amazing grace which Christ brought to us through the resurrection, but without the testimony of many throughout the years, those who spoke with power, even in the face of persecution, we would not know of the greatness of God’s gift to us.

This powerful testimony is still needed, perhaps even more today than ever. Those who bring the word of God to the people are afraid to bring a powerful testimony before them. We bring a soft, loving word which seems tame rather than powerful and which many do not heed in its quiet delivery. But, the love which caused our Lord to suffer and die for us is not soft, but powerful. The resurrection brings a power which can overcome death itself. It is not a soft, namby-pamby kind of love which we preach. The word of God which was brought with great power by the Apostles is still powerful today if we will only share it with others. The difference is not in the word, but in its delivery. The Apostles backed up the word of God with great faith and steadfastness in the face of persecution. We have no great fear of persecution. Instead, we are faced with apathy and those of us who share the word of the Lord are often afraid to offend the beliefs of others. Many are afraid to speak any word at all either because their own belief is not strong enough or because we do not believe that it will do any good. We do not live powerful lives of faith before others and we do not live deeply loving lives before them either so that we seem as every other person. We can bring back the powerful witness of believers. We can share the power of the resurrection as we continue along the path of the resurrection journey. The peace which Christ gave to us can overcome our fear both to testify and to live loving lives filled with compassion and the light of God’s presence among us.

The Apostles testified with great power because the resurrection was the most powerful event in history. Why do we not believe this and shout it from the roof tops? During his earthly life, Jesus did many wonders – healings, the casting out of demons, walking upon the water, stilling the storms. He also brought us powerful teaching about the way life should be lived and what the kingdom of God is like. None of these was as powerful as the resurrection. Yet

we act as if it was an ordinary occurrence. Or worse, as if it was just a vision some people had with no reality behind it. The power of the resurrection is in the intimate relationship with God which it made possible. The fellowship of God or the harmony between God and humanity as well as between each person is only possible because of the resurrection. Let us be bold and powerful in our testimony as the Apostles before us. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. What power is there in the resurrection?
2. How well do I testify to the power of the resurrection?
3. How can I do a better job of bringing the power of the resurrection to others?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

1. If you have not already done so, make a list of those with whom you would like to share the power of the resurrection.
2. Make another list of the things you have gained as a believer because of the power of the resurrection.

*Lord Jesus Christ, you have given more than anyone could possibly have hoped to receive. Thank you for your sacrifice and for your resurrection. Help me to become a powerful witness to those who do not know of your loving gifts. Make your resurrection a beacon to those who do not yet know you. Guide my words and my actions throughout this resurrection journey so that others will know of you through me. In your powerful name, I pray. Amen.*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY IN EASTER – April 19<sup>th</sup>

**CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: May I have life through believing...for you are Jesus, the Messiah.**

*Jesus, Messiah, Christ, my Redeemer and my Savior, I come before you believing in your mighty name. I worship you and desire to know you more and more. This week of resurrection joy comes to an end, yet I know the resurrection journey is just beginning. Stay with me as we continue to walk together. I believe all that you have taught me. Though I may at times have doubts and need to be reminded of your loving presence, do not forsake me for I deeply desire the life you have given. In your saving name, I pray. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE: John 20:30-31**

**KEY VERSE: John 20:30-31:**

**(30) “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. (31) 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” (NRSV).**

Jesus, whose name is above all names, has power and grace and love and more to give to his believers. Our scripture passage today tells us that much more could have been written about our Christ. But, John believed that what had been written was enough for us to come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that through that believing we might have life in his name. The Gospel according to John was the last of the gospels to be written and he was probably familiar with the others. This gospel gives many things which are not mentioned in the other gospels and there are others not mentioned in this one. I know that what is contained in these books and in the rest of the New Testament is sufficient to bring us to belief so that the Holy Spirit can become a part of our lives and lead us further into both understanding and into the kingdom of God. And yet, there are times when I wish that more of the things Jesus said and did before his disciples had been written down for us. There are so many questions that might have been answered, so many doubts that might have been avoided.

What kind of life can we expect through belief in the resurrected Lord? Jesus told us that he came that we might have abundant life. We may not understand just how this will come about. I do know that it will not be the same kind of life we live now. It will be a sacrificial life. It will be a servant's life. It will be a life filled with love. It will be a life worth more than the life we now live. We may have a taste of this life while we are here on earth as we follow the teachings of our Lord. This is why we have been given instruction on how we are to live. If we follow this instruction, we will have a more abundant life here on earth and we will have harmony, both with God and with each other. As we grow into this kind of life, we will have joy, peace and understanding of the kingdom of God. Christ told Pilate during his trial before him that his kingdom was not of this earth. He is the gate that leads into his kingdom and his teachings let us know how we are expected to behave. While we are here on earth we may enter into a portion of his kingdom by following his teachings. We enter fully through belief which includes following his teachings and his examples. This is why what is written in the scriptures is important to our journey into belief. Without them we would have no instruction about the life we are called to live as believers. I have heard, along with most of you I'm sure, that BIBLE stands for Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth. It's a fun ditty with much meaning. Yet, our entrance into the kingdom of God does not wait for our death. It

begins when we take our first step into the faith journey and accept Jesus, the resurrected one, into our hearts as our Savior. It does not end there, it begins there. The words of John, as well as those contained in Matthew, Mark, Luke and the epistles, are given so that we might come to belief and follow Christ in all things. Walking along the resurrection journey will continue to help us enter the abundant life more fully. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

**ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: John 13:2-17, 14, 15**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:**

1. What have I learned about life from the scriptures?
2. Am I living the abundant life in harmony with God and my fellow humans?
3. What more do I need to understand about the life Jesus gives?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:**

If you do not have one, get a good concordance. Do a study of the scriptures about life as Jesus taught about it. Write down all the things you learn about how we are to live in harmony with God and one another. It may be the most rewarding study and the most enlightening study you will ever do.

*Dearest Lord, as we come to the end of this first week of the resurrection journey, keep me firmly grounded in your word. I would learn more about the abundant life I may live in your kingdom. Bring me into harmony with you and with my fellow humans as I continue to travel with you. In your guiding name, I pray. Amen.*