

Worship Material
Locking and unlocking
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 27th April

Begin with an opening prayer

Here we stand at the door and knock:

open our hearts to your love.

Here we hesitate and doubt:

open our minds to your truth.

Here we hide in fear and pain:

open our spirit to your peace.

Here we gather in doubt and joy:

open our lives to welcome all.

Amen.

Read John 20:19-31

Bible notes

Mary Magdalene told Peter and the beloved disciple that Jesus' tomb was empty. They looked for themselves but then just returned home (20:10). She waited and wept there and was met by her risen Lord. Although she did not touch him, she was able to tell the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord' who was ascending to his Father and their Father. Rather than rejoicing, they locked themselves away in fear. Despite this, Jesus, who is himself 'an open door, which no one is able to shut' (Revelation 3:8), appeared to them. He showed them his hands and side, breathed the Holy Spirit on them and sent them out to proclaim forgiveness in his name. They followed Mary's example and told the missing Thomas, 'We have seen the Lord', although yet again they shut themselves away.

In John's Gospel, many characters struggle for faith and understanding and engage Jesus in dialogue. Nicodemus asks about being 'born again' (3:4), the Samaritan woman asks about 'living water' (4:10), Martha asks about 'the resurrection' (11:24), and Thomas himself asks about 'the way' (14:4-7). Jesus' willingness to respond helps us to unlock the meaning of unfolding events. Mary asks where the body has been laid, and when Jesus responds, 'Mary', she meets her 'Rabbouni' (20:16). When Jesus again comes through those closed doors, he graciously invites Thomas to 'reach out your hand', and Thomas

worships him, 'My Lord and my God'. Thomas, who was so concerned about 'the way' in which Jesus was leading them (14:4-7), was willing to die for his cause (11:16). To be faithful to the way of the cross, he needed to know that the risen one was indeed the wounded one, and that the crucified victim is worthy to be recognised as Lord and worshipped as God. As 'those who have not seen and yet have come to believe' (v.29), we are blessed with the stories of those who asked Jesus their own questions, with one another's testimonies and with the Spirit who continues to unlock for us the truth about Jesus (16:14-15).

Prayer

Risen Lord, we give thanks and praise for our many blessings.
You know our point of need and you meet it.
Because of you we have reason to rejoice.
You opened our hearts and blessed us with your peace.
**Thank you, risen Lord. Because of you we live and grow
in witness to your love.
We praise your Holy Name.
Amen.**

A prayer to conclude

Let us go out with laughter
to spread God's joy.
Let us go out with passion
to spread God's truth.
Let us go out with compassion
to spread God's healing.
Let us go out with love
to spread God's peace.
Amen.

