

## **John's Gospel: Preaching the "Sign" Narratives**

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#### **Introduction**

Students of John's gospel are familiar with John's "sign narratives". Even casual readers of the Gospel will likely notice the frequent use of the word signs. John frequently uses the word signs to refer to Jesus' miracles. The word may intend to emphasize the action more than the results or the marvel of the onlookers.

Although John does not continue to number the signs after mentioning the first sign and the second sign (chapters 2 and 4), the sign narratives listed below may be noted. One may also note the use of the word sign in some cases when there is not an extended miracle narrative.

#### **The meaning of the word "sign" in John's Gospel**

John clearly focuses on the "signs" of Jesus' identity and mission. If in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus comes doing mighty works and speaking mighty words, teaching, preaching and healing, in John's gospel he performs signs on the sick, lame, blind, and dead. John uses the sign narratives to demonstrate who Jesus is—very God dwelling among us.

In understanding John's gospel, one should study carefully the comparative use of the words sign, miracle, and wonder. John uses miracle and wonder infrequently, often coupled with the word sign. John connects the signs and faith. Yet the signs of Jesus are not universally accepted as evidence of his identity—they are contested and denied, and even those who believe he can perform such miracles often fail to appreciate their significance.

#### **Signs and Miracles**

John's gospel includes at least the following miracles or sign narratives. The way in which these are counted or listed varies from author to author. This series will treat seven signs, excluding two miracles that were performed privately with only the apostles present, Jesus walking on water and the miraculous catch of fish.

- Wedding in Cana
- Healing of nobleman's son
- Man at pool (not called a sign, except see 6:2)
- Feeding of 5000 [walking on water]
- Healing of blind man
- Raising of Lazarus
- Resurrection
- [Fishing miracle]

Based on the text of John, there are unrecorded signs. For example, 2:23 indicates the people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed, yet we have only one clear sign narrative to this point in the text, performed at the wedding in Cana. The events that John records and labels as signs have the distinction of being done in public so that others can see. The healing of the nobleman's son may provide an exception, but must be included because John labels it as a second sign.

### **John's Use of the word "sign"**

Following is a list of all of John's uses of the word "sign". There may be other miracle stories that some would include as signs.

- 2:11, first miraculous sign
- 2:18, Jews were seeking a sign, evidence of authority
- 2:23, people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed
- 3:2, Nicodemus, no one can perform the miraculous signs if God were not with him
- 4:48, unless you see miraculous signs and wonders, you will not believe
- 4:54, second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee
- 6:2, crowds followed because they saw the miraculous signs he performed on the sick
- 6:14, after they saw the miraculous sign Jesus did (bread?), they said he was the Prophet who was to come into the world
- 6:26, you are following not because you saw miraculous signs but because you were filled
- 6:30, what miraculous sign will you give so we may believe
- 7:31, when the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?
- 9:16, how can a sinner do such miraculous signs
- 10:41, John never performed a miraculous sign
- 11:48, this man is performing many miraculous signs (after raising of Lazarus)
- 12:18, many heard he had given this miraculous sign (Lazarus)
- 12:37, even after Jesus did all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still did not believe
- 20:30, Jesus did many other miraculous signs not recorded here

### **Purposes of Signs**

The signs seem to have at least four purposes. First, the signs in John's gospel reveal some fact or characteristic of God or Jesus. The first sign revealed Jesus' glory. If glory is revealed, it matters now how big or small the miracle may seem from a human perspective. Little things become big things if they have big results. It is not the spectacular that matters, but the result. Second, the signs may communicate the completeness of Jesus' actions on behalf of human beings.

Third, Jesus' signs demonstrate the availability of abundance. The abundant life is first seen in Jesus' signs.

Fourth, the signs develop faith in those who see and comprehend the significance of the miracle. The disciples believed as a result of the first sign. There are also some present at some of the signs who do not believe and reject Jesus.

### **Concepts that Provide a Filter for Understanding the Parallel Nature of the Signs**

Several common themes can be identified in a comparison of the signs. These statements are true in each of the sign narratives.

- The purpose of the sign is to reveal something about God or Jesus. An important part of understanding each of the signs is to ask what is being communicated about God or Jesus.

- The sign occurs in response to a human need that has arisen in the normal course of events. The signs are not artificially contrived.
- The sign completely solves the problem, and the solution reflects abundance
- There are some people present who do not understand or accept the sign. In some cases, the narratives present these as an opposing group, a part of the conflict theme in John's gospel.
- The results are noted

## **The First Sign: a Wedding in Cana**

John 2:1-11

### **Textual and Contextual Observations**

The sign is the changing of water to wine at the wedding in Cana.

The miracle met a need. Generally, Jesus' signs were needs-meeting. Miracles were designed to demonstrate that God exists, but miracles were not done for the sake of the miracle. The miracles were not contrived demonstrations. The signs are given in response to a need.

This miracle was face-saving.

The miracle may have symbolic meanings. Is Jesus' (and John's) use of wine a symbolic continuation of the Old Testament blessings which were communicated with the figure of wine, for example, the wine of joy or the wine of blessing?

### **Identifying the Conceptual Structure**

- What the sign reveals. The context explicitly says this sign was designed to show Jesus' glory (v. 11).
- The human need that is met. The host of the wedding feast had run out of wine (v. 3), certainly a source of embarrassment, and possibly a failure to meet a culturally accepted standard of graciousness. Perhaps the problem arose because of an unexpected number of guests. Perhaps the problem reflects that the host family was not among the wealthy. This dilemma may not seem a big problem in our society, but Jesus is concerned about our problems, whether great or small in our view.
- The solution to the problem. Jesus solves the problem (vv. 8-10) by providing additional wine that is of very high quality. He not only solves the problem, he solves it with an abundance of high quality so that the wedding feast can be fully celebrated.
- Those who do not understand. The master of the banquet is among those who did not know the source of the wine and understand what had happened (v. 9). If someone does not understand the miracle, that person cannot be impressed with what is being communicated. The sign narratives are given to us, according to John (20:30-31) so that we might believe.
- The result. The stated result is limited to the disciples who put their faith in Jesus having seen his glory (v. 11). "Disciples" in this context likely refers only to the Twelve.

### **Preaching the Sign Narrative**

Template. While the specific details of this sign are interesting, the sign is fairly well-known and the story is easily told. Thus, this first lesson in a suggested series provides an opportunity to set forth the template which will be used throughout the series. In the context of John's gospel, this sign narrative seems to provide a template for the sign narratives which follow, a conceptual structure that can guide each sermon in the series.

Themes. This sign understood in its larger context (and also the signs that follow) correlates with the themes of John's gospel, i.e. life, abundance, timing (hour), glory. Each sign connects with a specific subset of Johannine themes. In each of the lessons, specific themes from John can be highlighted.

Application. Since the narrative makes clear that Jesus' glory is being revealed, this sermon can ask about how Jesus' glory is seen in modern day celebrations. Many celebrations include a religious element.

Is Jesus concerned about the everyday events of our lives? Do we consider Christianity a part of our daily life? Do we consider any parts of our life too small to bother Jesus with them?

What part of the events reveals his glory? One can observe the principle of obedience (do whatever he tells you), but is that primary in this narrative or secondary?

### **Sermon Suggestion**

Where is Jesus' glory seen? Have you seen Jesus' glory?

- In little things. Jesus' glory is not visible only in large things. Jesus' glory is all around us in little things.
- In his compassion for the need at hand. Do you see the care Jesus has for his acquaintances who have run out of wine? How do you understand the abundance he provides?
- In his commonness. Since Jesus is exalted, we can see his glory in his willingness to dirty his hands in the everyday events of life.
- Jesus' glory was to declare the Father's glory as the one who sent him.
- The disciples were able to believe as a result. Are you ready to put your faith in him?

## **The Second Sign: Healing a Nobleman's Son**

John 4:43-54

### **Textual and Contextual Observations**

This sign is identified as a second sign "after Jesus came from Judea to Galilee." This helps explain that there were other signs prior to this one (2:23).

The first two verses of the text provide foundation for understanding the story.

While Jesus says that a prophet is not honored in his home country, the Galileans welcomed him, apparently based on what they had seen him do in Jerusalem.

This welcome may indicate only their desire for more miracles (v. 48).

If so, Jesus ignores the ulterior motives in providing healing for the nobleman's son.

Themes of John's gospel which are reflected in this narrative include belief/unbelief, life, honor, and timing.

### **Identifying the Conceptual Structure**

- What the sign reveals. This is not stated in the narrative, so the reader must decide between several options. One of the most appealing is the revelation of the power of Jesus' words. Against the background of John's introduction of Jesus as the Word of God, the power of his words for healing and for faith is visible. This is also reflected in v. 42 at the conclusion of the previous narrative, the woman at the well. Another option would be to focus on this sign as a revelation of Jesus' compassion. Regardless, that which is revealed is sufficient to provide the basis for faith at the end of the narrative.
- The human need which is met. The nobleman's son is near death (v. 47). The nobleman apparently believes that his son will die without intervention (v. 49).
- The solution to the problem. Jesus "heals" his son (v. 50) by speaking it so, and the man accepts the statement of Jesus.
- Those who do not understand. The servants who meet the father with the news of the son's improvement (v. 51) were unaware of the encounter between Jesus and the nobleman. It is not clear in the text if these were among the household members who believed.
- The result. The nobleman's household believed (v. 54), thus extending the faith which can as a result of the miracle to those who had not personally seen Jesus nor heard his words.

### **Preaching the Sign Narrative**

That this sign might function to reveal Jesus' power or the power of Jesus' words provides an interesting focus.

Some cannot see a prophet because he is one of them (from their own country).

Themes. This sign narrative has obvious roots in the encounter with the Samaritan woman. The move from Samaria to Galilee provides a hospitable location as "the Galileans welcome him." The reason for the welcome is that they had seen his actions in Jerusalem. The actions are not called signs, but see 2:23.

In Samaria, Jesus had spoken and the people had been convinced. (“We have heard for ourselves”). This sign is connected to the first sign by the location in Cana of Galilee. The sign has few connections with typical Johannine themes.

Application. It seems the power of Jesus’ words is the focus of chapter 4. More broadly, we may say that Jesus’ power is being revealed. In parallel to the first sermon in the series, one may ask how Jesus’ power is seen today.

### **Sermon Suggestion**

Possible topic: Revealing Jesus’ Power. This second sign can be connected to the first sign and sermon: Revealing Jesus’ Glory.

Where have you seen Jesus’ power? What would it take for you to acknowledge the power of Jesus’ words?

When is Jesus’ power not seen or acknowledged because we are “too close” to him?

Jesus is introduced in John’s gospel as the Word, but the power of that word is not fully revealed in the introduction.

Sometimes powerful words overwhelm people so that they reject the obvious, compare 1:11.

Sometimes powerful words are not enough—those who observe expect action.

Why does the nobleman take Jesus at his word?

Why do people today take Jesus at his word? Why do people today not take Jesus at his word?

Jesus claims the power of his words, 12:48

How do powerful words make clear that Jesus is Savior (v. 42)?

How do powerful words generate belief?

## **The Third Sign: Healing at the Pool**

John 5:1-15

### **Textual and Contextual Observations**

The sign occurs in the context of a Jewish feast.

Probably Jews went to the feast focused on God and self more than others.

Perhaps Jesus observed what others did not observe. Why did Jesus especially notice this man? What attitude should one read into the question of Jesus? (Do you want to be well?)

The man has already decided what would help him, how the healing can occur? He is waiting for someone to do what he expects and thinks he needs.

Jesus does not do what he expects, but provides the desired result in a different way.

Themes to be explored include hope (would you still be lying at the pool after 38 years?), expectation, and obedience.

### **Identifying the Conceptual Structure**

- What the sign reveals. As with the second sign, this sign narrative does not make clear what is being revealed. Certainly Jesus' power is seen. Another possibility based on the development of the narrative is that Jesus' authority is being revealed. The authority theme is reinforced by the Sabbath controversy that arose afterward. One might also note that Jesus' compassion is being revealed. Both of these themes present possibilities for preaching this sign narrative.
- The human need which is met. The man at the pool has been an invalid for 38 years (vv. 5-7).
- The solution to the problem. Jesus solves the problem in an unexpected way (vv. 8-9). He did not place the man in the water but merely commanded him to get up and walk. The man was cured and picked up his mat and walked. The manner of healing suggests Jesus' authority, especially the authority of his word.
- Those who do not understand. In the case of this narrative, the lack of understanding or acceptance is presented through an opposing group whose members question Jesus' authority to tell the man to "work" on the Sabbath (v. 10-13).
- The result. While the obvious result is that the man is healed, the narrative also serves to introduce more completely the upcoming conflict between Jesus and the Jews, suggesting the significance of the authority theme.

### **Preaching the Sign Narrative**

An interesting and often observed part of the narrative is the question, "Do you want to be well?" Why does the man not question Jesus' command, given that it is a Sabbath day? Why does the man not seek to know who Jesus is? Note how Jesus' identity is being revealed little by little in the John narratives, perhaps with some parallel to the Messianic secret theme of the Synoptic Gospels. Does the man who was healed say thank you? What is the significance of Jesus' admonition to stop sinning? Note the possibility that the Jewish leaders acknowledge the man when he is breaking the Sabbath but not when he is lying at the pool.

## **Sermon Suggestion**

Revealing Jesus' Authority.

Why does Jesus have authority? What would it take for you to listen to Jesus?

Jesus had authority....

- Because he was compassionate, because he cared, was concerned, took time for someone considered unimportant in the society.
- Because he was personal, he listened
- Because he helped

Our words have more meaning when they are accompanied by a Christ-like attitude and actions.

Jesus' words and actions make his identification with God believable.

[One may wish to treat the larger context of John 5, making the identification of Jesus with God a part of his authority claim (see v. 27).]

Jesus authority (and identity) is supported by multiple witnesses.

John the Baptist testifies of him.

Jesus' work testifies of him.

The Father testifies of him.

The Scriptures testify of him.

## **The Fourth Sign: Feeding the 5000**

John 6:1-27

### **Textual and Contextual Observations**

One of the challenges in preaching the sign narratives is determining the periscope or textual section to be treated. The sign narratives exist in the context of much longer sections which provide application.

This narrative is immediately followed by the story of Jesus walking on the water. The feeding narrative is expanded to include Jesus' commentary in vv. 26-27. Jesus acknowledges that the feeding was a sign, but shows that the physical results of the signs may be desired more than the spiritual significance.

In this sermon series, the miracle of Jesus walking on the water is not included as a sign because the signs included in the study are limited to the public signs.

Themes to be explored include Jews and Gentiles, Jewish expectations, Old Testament/Moses and New Covenant/Christ, physical and spiritual, different kinds of "food".

### **Identifying the Conceptual Structure**

- What the sign reveals. The text says (v. 14) that the people recognized Jesus as the Prophet after they witnessed the feeding. This seems to indicate that the sign revealed or made certain Jesus' identity. As part of a progressive revelation of Jesus' nature, the sign may also be described as revealing his origin. His identity will also be revealed in the next sign narrative, the healing of the blind man. Based on the concluding section of the narrative, one may say that what is being revealed is the spiritual nature of Jesus' ministry. (See "result" below.)
- The human need which is met. The need is an everyday, common need. The people who have come to Jesus are hungry (v. 5). Although a physical need is met, the desired result is to recognize spiritual realities.
- The solution to the problem. The problem is solved by providing food sufficient for all present (5000 men only) and more (vv. 11-13). The abundance theme is reflected in the amount left over.
- Those who do not understand. Those who did not understand the significance of the sign are identified as those Jews who would have made Jesus king by force (v. 15). Their misunderstanding was based on a faulty belief concerning the nature of the Messiah and the nature of the coming Kingdom.
- The result. The nature of Jesus' ministry and kingdom will not be physical but spiritual. The Messianic kingdom will not provide a solution to every physical ill—food, provision, and deliverance from oppressing foes. The coming kingdom will be spiritual in nature. The people believe, but their belief is misdirected and their expectation based on faulty understanding (vv. 14-15).

### **Preaching the Sign Narrative**

One purpose of the sign may be to test the disciples (v. 6).

The twelve baskets in which the leftovers were collected may be the disciples' lunch baskets. The number "twelve" in this narrative, compared with the "seven" baskets left over at the

feeding of the 4000, has been understood by some to reflect a “Jewish” feeding narrative and a “Gentile” feeding narrative.

The origin or identity of Jesus as a theme in this narrative is developed more fully through the water-walking story which follows. One may wish to note the larger context, or to include the narrative of Jesus’ walking on the water as a logical follow-up to the development of faith in the disciples. The sermon suggestion below summarizes the entire chapter.

### **Sermon Suggestions**

Theme: Revealing Jesus’ Spiritual Ministry

What do you seek? Why are you a Christian? What will cause other people to become Jesus’ disciples? [These questions allow an effective contrast between the physical and the spiritual, a comparison which seems to get at the heart of this narrative.]

John 6 is the set up for John 7-8.

Who “gets it”? What does that mean? What do you do when you don’t get it?

What keeps us from getting it?

### **Some seek a physical king**

The people saw signs, they were compassionately fed (another sign, surely this is the prophet)

They did not understand, Jesus withdrew (sometimes Jesus leaves)

Did the apostles participate in this (Matt. 14:22)?

### **The disciples seek a physical rescue**

The Twelve, Jesus had not joined them, perhaps he had promised to

They did not understand, terrified, but when he is identified, they accept him (Mk. 6:50-52)

### **The people seek a physical meal**

So the people seek him again, vv. 26-27

It is made clear again that they do not understand

### **The Jewish leaders see a competitor [physical or spiritual?]**

The Jewish leaders seek an argument; they have put spiritual realities in the physical realm

They do not understand, “from heaven?”

### **Jesus proclaims a new reality**

The disciples, vv. 53-58 are the genesis of what?

They are called to participate, not merely to go through the rituals

Apostles don’t understand. Where else could we go?

We believe and know who you are.

## **The Fifth Sign: Healing the Blind Man**

John 9:1-41

### **Textual and Contextual Observations**

This narrative may be outlined by considering the parties involved: the disciples, the blind man, the parents of the blind man, Pharisees or Jewish leaders.

Each of the parties has a partial and biased view of what is happening. New realities, beyond those previously considered imaginable, are being revealed.

This miracle is not specifically called a sign, although it is identified with Jesus' signs in a general way by the reference that Jesus was performing signs (9:16). The healing is clearly public, and was designed to establish identity and faith, which was the result for the blind man.

Themes to be developed include "I am" (from the concluding verses in the previous chapter), day/night, light/dark, sin/illness, Sabbath, blindness/belief, spiritual blindness.

### **Identifying the Conceptual Structure**

- What the sign reveals. That this sign reveals Jesus' identity is suggested first in his "light of the world" affirmation (v. 5). His subsequent conversation with the blind man (vv. 35-38) records another identity statement and the ensuing belief statement of the blind man who can now see.
- The human need which is met. The need is introduced in one short statement (v. 1). A man is blind from birth. There are other needs that could be mentioned—misunderstanding of the disciples, lack of compassion of the neighbors, control issues for the religious leaders.
- The solution to the problem. Jesus solves the primary problem by healing the blind man (v. 7).
- Those who do not understand. Throughout the narrative (vv. 8-34) we find lack of understanding statements—the disciples, the neighbors, the man's parents, and the religious leaders.
- The result. The primary result is the belief of the blind man (v. 38). One should also note the continuing confrontation with the Pharisees (vv. 39-41).
- One may wish to mention the Good Shepherd narrative which follows, apparently spoken as a contextual explanation of the event, but specifically addressing all of chapters 9-10 is likely too much material for one sermon.

### **Preaching the Sign Narrative**

This sign narrative is fun and easy to preach—in part because of the multiple dynamics at work, and in part because it is so true to life.

It lends itself to simply telling the story and making applications as the narrative unfolds. This approach may also be described as "person" or "group" based since the groups are introduced one by one.

If one approaches the narrative as a "story" to be told, it may be helpful to spend a brief time "setting up" the story, although such may not be essential, depending on the lessons one chooses to emphasize.

### **Sermon Suggestion**

Review the sequence and thought development:

Revealing Jesus glory—power over water (consider the ‘smallness’ of the miracle)

Revealing Jesus’ power—power over illness

Revealing Jesus’ authority—power over illness/Sabbath

Revealing Jesus as a spiritual (not physical) king—power over food/nature

Revealing Jesus’ identity as divine—power over blindness/Sabbath

What do you see as you go through life each day?

- The disciples see a Bible question
- The blind man experiences healing
- The neighbors saw a nobody
- The parents perceive a threat
- The Pharisees perceive a challenge
- Jesus perceives an opportunity

## **The Sixth Sign: Raising Lazarus**

John 11:1-48

### **Textual and Contextual Observations**

Neither is this miracle clearly called a sign, although the fact that Jesus was performing signs is mentioned in 11:47. Again, the healing is clearly public, and was designed to establish identity and faith, which was also the result for the blind man.

One purpose of this sign seems to be to test the faith and understanding of the disciples.

Thomas suggests that going with Jesus to Bethany could be so dangerous as to result in death.

Themes to be developed include the “I am” statement (11:25-26), identity questions, glory, faith, life/death.

### **Identifying the Conceptual Structure**

- What the sign reveals. One can identify several possibilities in the narrative. Jesus says that his purpose in the conversation with Martha was that the people observing might believe that he was sent from God (vv. 38-42).
- The human need which is met. The human need is the most intense thus far of the miracles or signs—Lazarus is dead (cf. vv. 1, 14).
- The solution to the problem. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (vv. 43-44).
- Those who do not understand. The continuing confrontation with the Jews is focused as a result of this sign (vv. 45-53).
- The result. This miracle again resulted in faith, this time from many of the Jews (v. 45). Another result was that the conflict with the Jews became so intense that Jesus could no longer move freely among the Jews (vv. 53-54). He withdrew from public view.

### **Preaching the Sign Narrative**

The progressive nature of the signs should be noted as the sermon series draws to a conclusion. The signs are moving toward increasing confrontation with the Jewish opposition. The sequence is as follows:

- water to wine in private setting
- healing of son of king’s official (first intersection with royalty)
- healing at Jewish feast on Sabbath
- feeding which results in desire to establish new king (question of royalty)
- healing on Sabbath results in confrontation with Pharisees, accusation of spiritual blindness
- raising of Lazarus results in clear threat to Jewish leaders (“all will follow him”), and Romans will come and take away our place, nation, authority

### **Sermon Suggestion**

Revealing Jesus Power over Death

The narrative functions in several ways. This last narrative before capstone miracle, the resurrection of Jesus, returns to the “glory” theme of the first sign. The sign is said to occur for the faith or belief of the disciples, providing connections and a parallel to the first sign.

The sign shows Jesus' power over death, and thus the futility of the Jewish effort to silence him by killing him. Death will not hold Jesus since he has demonstrated power over life and death, he is resurrection and life (both physical and spiritual, physical and eternal).

His divine identity is declared by Martha, an interesting "twist" in a story where one might expect the disciples to finally "get it". One can expand the point that those who "get it" are not those who might reasonably be expected to "get it."

This power of this narrative can easily be diminished by too much explanation and too many detours. The John narratives must be allowed to do what they are designed to do, and the temptation to pile on too much baggage must be studiously avoided.

Do the Jewish leaders who plot against him also believe in him? Why is he such a threat to them? Even the enemies of Jesus accurately prophesy concerning Jesus!

The anointing and Bethany can provide a fitting conclusion to this sermon, since Jesus is prepared for burial in a tomb that will ultimately not be able to keep him.

## **The Seventh Sign: Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances**

John 20:1-31

### **Textual and Contextual Observations**

This context includes the text of 20:30-31 and makes a fitting conclusion to the lessons which preached as a series.

One way to schedule this sermon series would be to schedule this climactic sermon on Easter Sunday. In a sense, this provides a biographic sketch of Jesus. It also focuses on the process and dynamics of faith development.

Themes to be identified might be limited to those "revelations" chosen in the previous sermons in the series: glory, power, authority, spiritual, healing, life.

### **Identifying the Conceptual Structure**

- What the sign reveals. The resurrection reveals the deity of Jesus.
- The human need which is met. The need, especially obvious in the Thomas narrative later in the chapter, is for faith among Jesus' followers. Jesus must clearly reveal who he is: Is he the Messiah?
- The solution to the problem. Jesus shows himself as the Word, Messiah, Son of God, Life—more clearly than he has to this point. Indeed, the resurrection is central and capstone.
- Those who do not understand. Among those who do not understand or believe is one of the disciples, Thomas (v. 25).
- The result. The result is what the signs have all of the signs been pointing toward—faith (vv. 28-29).

### **Preaching the Sign Narrative**

One challenge in preaching this sign narrative is that the resurrection story will be quite familiar to many of the listeners. How does the resurrection proclaim that Jesus is divine? What are the implications for Jesus' divinity? How do these relate to Jesus as Lord of our lives (the declaration of Thomas: my Lord and my God)?

### **Sermon Suggestion**

Who sees Jesus clearly?

The narrative takes turn describing the experience of various of Jesus' followers.

- Mary Magdalene
- Peter and John
- Mary Magdalene
- The disciples
- Thomas

Can we see? What will it take for us to see? What will it take for us to believe? What will it take for us to act on that belief?