

Mark 16 9-20 4

John 20:24-31

²⁴ Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." ²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed." ³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Let's go back to our story. Last week we looked at Christ crashing the Disciple's closed door meeting. It was on Sunday evening. Things were happening fast. Reports were coming in. The Emmaus hikers were still talking when Christ appeared to the 10 disciples and others. Thomas was not there. This appearance convinced the disciples beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ was risen. But again, Thomas was not there.

This morning we see Thomas's first encounter with the risen Lord. This is 8 days later, so, depending on how they were counting the days, this would probably be the Monday that fell a week later than the Sunday of Christ's last visit.

Now, where was Thomas when Christ showed up the first time? The truth is, we don't know. It is very likely Thomas could have been with the other apostles if he wanted to be. After all, it isn't like he was fully employed elsewhere. Travelling with Christ had been his job for the last several years.

Think about how Thomas may have been feeling. Thomas was not a person who would quickly trust others. He was very skeptical. Remember that when Christ talked about going to Lazarus's home it was Thomas who said, "Let's also go that we can die with Him." Thomas was a thinking kind of person, not a feeling kind of person. He made decisions based on the facts. Thomas had followed Christ, he had gone all in with Christ, based on the facts that he analyzed. But he had never signed up **for this**. Thomas is very likely brooding by himself. He is probably thinking that his decision to follow Christ was stupid. He had made a mistake.

On top of this, Thomas probably was not the kind of person who would have a lot of deep personal relationships. And the ones he did have were probably very important to him. Now one of the most important friends of his was dead. He would have experienced that as a deep blow. He was not the kind of person who could just blow off such a thing and get on with life.

So Thomas is probably suffering. But the problem is, he chose to suffer alone. Often, when we choose to suffer alone, when we choose to exclude those we trust from our suffering, we deprive ourselves of the comfort we could receive from others. Every dilemma **we find ourselves in** has an answer in God's Word. The Word either teaches us how to look at it correctly, or how to change the situation. The dilemmas we keep the longest are those that we keep most to ourselves. What is the problem that most plagues your life? Where do you find yourself falling short time after time? Where does your life circumstance rule you rather than you ruling your response to it?

Take that place and ask yourself, "have I really shared in depth how I feel and think about this with someone who can help me?" If we will do that, we will often find people really can help us with our dilemmas. We may stay in the same situation, but will face it with a different perspective. Or maybe we will be convinced to change our circumstances.

Had Thomas been with the others, he would have suffered 8 days less than he did. That is worth noting this morning.

Another thing we may want to notice is that Jesus didn't announce **when** He was going to show up with these believers. Those who were there got it. Those who weren't didn't. One of the reasons I have always committed myself and my family to meeting weekly in this fellowship is for this reason. The presence of Christ in our worship can't be replication or reproduced later. The experience of these few moments together, once missed, are gone forever. That isn't to say that we won't have the presence of Christ in times when we aren't here. But the experience of Him revealing Himself to us in worship won't be the same as listening to the sermon online or talking among ourselves. For me, that is too important to miss unless something temporarily more important comes along.

²⁵ **The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."**

Now we read this and it is easy to forget that 8 days had gone by. And for 8 days what do you think Thomas's friends are trying to do? They are trying to convince him that Christ raised from the dead. The verb tense used here means they kept telling Thomas. After a few days the disciples are probably getting pretty irritated with Thomas. C'mon man, they might be saying. Are you calling all of us liars? Do you think we are delusional? Do you think we are stupid? We saw Christ. It is

easy imagining a guy like Thomas, a guy that just wants to go by the facts finally responding in a way that serves notice that he wants his friends to shut up. He wants them to stop badgering him.

So Thomas lays down what is required before he will believe that Christ rose from the dead. Look how specific he is.

He wants to see the nail prints in Christ's hands and he wants to touch them. And he wants to touch Christ's side. Until that happens Thomas is not going to believe. When that happens he will believe.

God created a lot of different kinds of people with all kinds of different personalities. When He places them in the church He also gives them gifts. But what is our great temptation when dealing with others? We want **them** to respond to situations just like **we** do. We want them to **get with the program**.

We want them to get in line and make things go smoothly and without waves. That is probably what the disciples are probably trying to do with Thomas. They want him to be excited by believing what the disciples believe based on the evidence that they saw. But we need to remember that even the disciples did not believe the first eye witness report that they heard. And **they** may not have believed if **they** didn't see.

But don't we often fail to see that people respond, in large part, based on the personality that God has given them? They cannot see the world except through the eyes of the person God has made them. Now I am not talking about **disobedient** decisions or **disbelieving** thinking. I am talking about how we see things. When a group of people confront a problem, one person might immediately help those who are harmed. Another person may think to call the authorities. Another person may think to stop the source of the harm. Another person might begin praying. We are all made differently. My point is that, because a person responds differently than we might, that does not mean that person is trying to be difficult. If they won't get with our program, that doesn't mean that they are not **following the program they are supposed to follow**.

Don't we often get irritated with each other and the real reason is that we want the other person to be like us. And they are not. We want everyone to go along gladly with **what we think** to be a good idea. And they cannot see it as a good idea. We think that something we ask could be done easily, but the person we are asking sees it completely differently. We do well to learn to love that person. We do well to talk to them until we understand where the resistance is coming from. And often it is not something that is their fault. It is simply a result of them seeing life through the eyes that God gave them.

Thomas is just being genuine here. He has to see proof. Thomas is probably a guy whose emotions go very deep. He can't take a hit like he just took very often. He had his hopes up and that doesn't happen often for a guy like this. He can't

afford to have them crashed. So before Thomas allows himself to hope again, he has to know it is safe. He has to know he is not violating the skepticism that is part of his make up. He has to know he is being reasonable and smart to allow this hope in his heart again.

Now we might be critical of him, but do you know what kind of people these are that are so skeptical? They are the kind of people that keep the church safe from error. They are the prophetic people who can see where things came from and where they are headed. So we would do well to cut Thomas a break here. He is likely just being genuine to who God has made him. And we would do well to go easy on each other when others are not as cooperative as we would like them to be. We are not living in their skin. We do not answer to God for how they use their time. We do well to not lump them into a category in our minds that they don't fit, just because they don't respond like we would like them to, or maybe even like we would.

OK, so we have the disciples all excited about Christ being risen. And then there is Thomas, who wants to believe but will not allow himself to until he sees the proof.

²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Now, why did Christ wait 8 days? We have no idea. All we know is that Christ shows up again in the middle of a closed room. I wonder if anyone was looking at the point where he materialized? Wow. That would really blow your mind.

Now we see that Thomas was with them. This may have been hard for Thomas with all these guys looking down on him for not believing their report. But Thomas was there. A little conflict, a little difficulty, and little misunderstanding was not going to get him to bail out. How good it would be if all church members followed Thomas's example here. How many people leave a church for far less than what was going on with Thomas here.

Now Christ again says Peace to you. This was a common greeting. And He was truly blessing them with the greatest peace that could be had. He bodily now represented peace with God. When Christ was there, it truly was peace with them.

²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Look at Christ's first order of business. Thomas was at the front of the line, probably because his need was the greatest. There is a part of Thomas that

wanted to believe. But he could not think he was being stupid in doing so. Christ is going to immediately bust that barrier.

Now, what would Thomas have immediately known when Christ told him to do exactly what Thomas said were the proof tests for Thomas before he would allow himself to believe?

The first thing Thomas would know is that Christ heard every word Thomas had said that expressed his doubts. Imagine how you might feel if Christ were to do this to us this morning. Suppose He were to show up and directly publicly address our doubts, whether spoken or just thought? How embarrassed would we be? How stricken to the heart might we be? How would we feel if He addressed the faithless words we uttered this week?

Suppose He were to look us in the eye and say, Yes, I am true, no matter what lies the world throws at you. I do exist and I am King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Or maybe He would say, yes, I promise to work out all those things you are so afraid of. Those fears you allow to debilitate you, I have those things in the palm of my hand.

Or maybe He would say, yes, you might not know what the future will bring. But I do. And you can trust me with that.

Or maybe He would say, yes, even that thing that you cannot make sense of.

Even that cost you pay that seems absolutely pointless, there is a point. I know what it is or I would not have allowed it to happen to you.

If Christ were specifically look at us and address our doubt, would it not cut us to the heart? Would we not feel ashamed for having doubted Christ? Well, isn't that a good reason for quitting right now? Isn't that a good reason to drop our doubts now and trust His word?

Christ looked at Thomas and addressed his doubts, exactly as Thomas had expressed them. Christ knew exactly what Thomas had both **said** and **thought**.

And Christ shows that He didn't think a whole lot of them.

Christ said- **Do not be unbelieving, but believing.**

The problem here isn't so much that Thomas didn't take the disciples' word for Christ's resurrection. The problem is that Thomas didn't take **Jesus's word** for the resurrection. Christ had promised that He would raise. But Thomas was choosing to not believe it.

The verb tense in this sentence basically means- Stop becoming an unbeliever and become a believer. Thomas was on the road to unbelief. He was only believing what he saw, what he experienced. But he was not believing what God Himself had clearly spoken. That is where **we** come into trouble. Thomas was becoming an **interpreter of evidence** rather than a **believer of God**. Jesus was dead.

Science says people stay that way. Jesus said that He would not. Thomas chose science over Jesus. And it would have appeared smart to the world, but in reality

it was the dumbest thing Thomas could do. Because Thomas knew better. Science says that people cannot walk on the water. Jesus did. Science says that people cannot make bread and fish out of nothing. Jesus did. Science says people cannot control the weather by speaking to it. Jesus did. Science says people cannot raise other people from the dead, and especially not by just speaking to them. But Jesus did. Now what smart reason did Thomas have for not believing Jesus would raise from the dead?

The most beautiful thing in this interaction is that Thomas was not kicked out of the club for having doubted Christ. Christ knew that Thomas **wanted** to believe. But Thomas was **afraid** to. He was afraid to believe something that was too good to be true. He didn't want to allow himself to **hope** again in case he was to be **disappointed** again. Christ knew what Thomas needed and He gave it to Thomas. Christ will do the same thing for anyone He calls to Himself. He will always give us what we need to grow our faith.

But the odd thing is that Thomas appears not to have really needed to touch the holes. What He really needed was to see Jesus. He needed to talk to His Savior. He needed the reassurance that His Savior lived.

Thomas appears to have taken Christ's admonition very seriously. Christ told Thomas to stop being an unbeliever and be a believer. Thomas did just that.

²⁸ **And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"**

Thomas calls Christ **Lord**- Kyrios koo-ree-ose and **God**- Theos. These were both titles of deity. If Christ's accepts this praise, He is essentially agreeing with Thomas that **Christ is God**. If Christ were not God He would have been obligated to set Thomas straight. Christ never sets Thomas straight. This is one of the clearest declarations of the deity of Jesus Christ in scripture.

The word for Lord means "'he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord"

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

I have a question for you this morning. "Does scripture describe a salvation whereby a person can call upon Christ as Savior but never submits to Him as Lord?"

How would you answer that question? What scriptures would you look to? This would be a good study and a good discussion for Sunday School.

When Thomas cries to Christ My Lord and My God, this was an amazing proclamation. Thomas was pronouncing himself a slave of this person Jesus. Thomas was no longer his own. His decisions for how he was going to live were no longer his to make. He has given that right back to the rightful owner. He gave his life back to His Lord. He has fallen into step with the reality that has always existed. Jesus Christ truly is Lord. It is just that most people won't admit it.

This is Christianity at its truest. I would contend that this is truly the starting place for the Christian life. It may not be the starting place for God's calling on our lives. But it is the point where living the Christian life begins. God is very good at being long suffering with us. He moves us through our ignorance and selfishness. He works upon our hearts in the most effective of ways until we reach this conclusion. Jesus Christ is Lord! And more importantly. Jesus Christ is MY Lord! It is then that our lives take on the proper perspective. It is then that we stop making decisions in the natural way and we begin making them in a spiritual way. We hold each of those decisions we must make up to God's perusal, God's approval or disapproval, God's guidance. It isn't that we stop making decisions. We still must do that to survive in this life. But those decisions are held up to a higher power first. We submit each of them to the Lordship of Christ. That is what a slave does. Our selfish interest is no longer our primary concern. Our Lord's interest is the primary concern. What we think will **make us happy** is no longer the first priority. What we think **will please our Savior** becomes highest priority. We allow **Him** to worry about what happiness He would like us to have. And normally there is a great deal of happiness. But it does not come from the places we would most expect it.

Is Jesus Christ your Lord this morning? Have you ever cried out like Thomas to Christ and declared Him your Lord and your God? This must happen if you are to believe in Christ. This must be the state of your heart. That is Christianity 101. Then what happens next. How does Christ respond to Thomas?

²⁹ **Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

First note that Christ did not deny Thomas's claim. Christ was God so Thomas could call Him that.

Next notice that Thomas's statement "My Lord and My God" was a statement of belief. Thomas didn't just believe that Christ rose from the dead. Thomas got the whole package. Christ's resurrection meant that Jesus Christ was God's incarnate Son. Christ was God. And Christ was Thomas's Lord. That is the belief package. When one comes to belief, they believe more than **facts** about a **person**. They embrace the truth of Christ with their whole lives. They don't just believe **about Christ**. They believe **IN Christ**. They receive the claims of Christ's Godhood as having absolute bearing over their lives. That is what truly believing in Christ does. Christ becomes more than a creed, more than a mantra, more than a statement of fact. Christ becomes Lord of all life. That is belief.

Now, what Christ says here is one of the greatest blessings from Christ Himself to you and me that we will ever get. And He states it here very clearly.

Why did Thomas believe Christ?

Christ showed up and displayed His physical reality. He allowed Thomas to see Him. Christ doesn't rebuke Thomas for this. But He does display it for what it is. The way Thomas believed was a step down from how the rest of the generations following Thomas would believe. Thomas saw. Those following Thomas would not see, but they would still believe.

Christ made it easier for Thomas to believe than it will be for all those that Thomas and the other 10 would be sent to preach to. Thomas and the disciples all saw and believed. The rest will not have that opportunity.

And that is right where we sit this morning.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

You and I, if we believe this morning, are the ones that Christ promises are the blessed ones. This is for us. These are Christ's words to you.

Often we have probably all wished that we would have gotten to see Christ, to have talked to Him, to have walked with Him. But Christ went out of His way here to let us know that it is we who are more blessed. And it is not by being blessed by **being with Him**. It is the blessing of **believing without seeing**, the blessing of believing by faith.

Now this does not mean that we believed blindly. God went out of His way to make sure we have as much historical evidence of what we believe as any other historical fact a person might believe in. This is not, in any way, saying that blind unreasoning faith in **something that has no evidence** is a virtue. But the blessing is in believing God without being able to experience the direct convincing truth that Thomas was privy to.

Christ realized that it would be more difficult to believe **without seeing** than it would be to believe **after seeing**. But the truth is, all of it is a miracle anyway. That God would grip our hearts and draw us to Himself is pretty amazing, no matter when and how He does it. But we are promised that we are blessed if we are of those who **believe without seeing**. And unless any of us have stories that I haven't heard about, we are all in that camp.

So we need to consider ourselves blessed to have believed with seeing.

³⁰ **And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;** ³¹ **but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**

This is how John finishes up this chapter. Then as an afterthought he writes chapter 21. Isn't it nice that he finishes it on a note that mostly all of his readers would relate to. He lets all of the readers know that Christ considered them blessed if, as a result of reading John's telling of the Gospel story they believed. Now John tells us that the story He told was not **the whole story**. Christ did even more amazing things, more proof of Christ's divinity than John told. And He did

them where the disciples could see them. They were verifiable by witnesses. They weren't made up hoaxes like other religions are based on. These were facts with witnesses.

And why did John write all this down? John wrote it so the same thing that happened to the 11 disciples could happen to us. **So we could catch the disease.** So we could believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, God in flesh, the Son of God. And that by believing **in Christ**, not just **about Christ**, we could have eternal life.

While every salvation may look different in many ways, every one is the same in this most central way. Everyone who truly comes to Christ by faith believes the facts about Him. And they also do business with the fact of who Christ is by **casting all their trust upon Him for their salvation and for the running of their lives.** We receive Christ's death on the cross to provide forgiveness of our sins and His Resurrection to provide us with the power to live a new life. At first we may not be able to explain it well. But we will know that our lives are Christ's. He is master. And we live to serve Him.

That is the point that Thomas was driven to in our story. And that is the reason that the book of John was written for us to read. So we can have a faith like Thomas's, even without seeing the nail and spear holes.

This week we would do well to examine the Lordship of Christ over all of our life? What are we holding back? Where do we not trust him enough to **believe what He says?** Where do we not trust Him enough to **do what He commands?** Call out to God and ask Him how you could be more pleasing to Him. Do you not think He will answer such a prayer? Or are we afraid to pray it because we don't want the answer.

When Thomas cried out "**My Lord and my God!**" it led to a significantly shorter life on this planet. Thomas died for his faith as far as we can tell. So there is nothing flippant about this commitment to Christ as Lord. It costs us our fleshly compulsions. It costs our comfort. It costs us our stubborn inclination to think and act however we feel like it. Our tirades and tantrums and schemes and secrets and selfish strategies and rebellions must die. They are put to death under the Lordship of Christ. Is that what we want? Because that is what Christianity is. Are you ready to cry out My Lord and My God?

Sing- I'd rather have Jesus