

John 20 New Life Version

Jesus Was Seen by His Followers—Thomas Was Not There

¹⁹ It was evening of the first day of the week. The followers had gathered together with the doors locked because they were afraid of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “May you have peace.” ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. When the followers saw the Lord, they were filled with joy.

Jesus Sends His Followers to Preach

²¹ Then Jesus said to them again, “May you have peace. As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you.” ²² When Jesus had said this, He breathed on them. He said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you say that people are free of sins, they are free of them. If you say that people are not free of sins, they still have them.”

Thomas Does Not Believe Jesus Is Raised from the Dead

²⁴ Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. He was one of the twelve followers and was called the Twin. ²⁵ The other followers told him, “We have seen the Lord!” He said to them, “I will not believe until I see the marks made by the nails in His hands. I will not believe until I put my finger into the marks of the nails. I will not believe until I put my hand into His side.”

Jesus Was Seen Again by His Followers—Thomas Was There

²⁶ Eight days later the followers were again inside a house. Thomas was with them. The doors were locked. Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “May you have peace!” ²⁷ He said to Thomas, “Put your finger into My hands. Put your hand into My side. Do not doubt, believe!” ²⁸ Thomas said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you believe. Those are happy who have never seen Me and yet believe!” ³⁰ Jesus did many other powerful works in front of His followers. They are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. When you put your trust in Him, you will have life that lasts forever through His name.

Duty, Faith, and Being Honest With Ourselves

I suspect that everyone knows what to expect from a sermon on “**Doubting Thomas**”.

I would encourage you to remember however that there is more than one thing in this chapter to consider;

Verses 21 through 23 ought to read more carefully, because Christ is giving us a mission here. Here is what Christ says:

Then Jesus said to them again, “May you have peace. As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you.” When Jesus had said this, He breathed on them. He said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

This is your mission statement as Christians.....; ***As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you.*** That wasn't a random statement; that was a dictate. Christ is sending all of us to bring his word to the world.

He is also arming us with the Holy Spirit, that we may know the meaning of his words, and understand the parables from which he taught.

The story of Thomas is intriguing for us for very human reasons, but if you wish to know the most important message Christ was giving us, it is what we just highlighted.

Thomas's story of doubt is more than likely one we all know.

Who among us has never had doubts about our faith? We seek some tangible, visible proof of God's existence, much less Christ's ability to forgive us all our sins, in a world in which scientific methods are *prima facie* the *raison d'être* of knowledge.

Thomas gets sort of a bad rap.

Who realistically could blame Thomas for seeking proof of Christ's living resurrection?

After expressing Thomas's doubts to the other disciples; days later he meets Christ resurrected with them.

Here however Christ makes a point that we can't miss:

“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you believe. Those are happy who have never seen Me and yet believe!”

How true! Wouldn't it be so much easier for us to believe in Christ if only Christ stood on a stage and danced and sang for each of us individually!

How little would it say however, for our capacity of faith.

It is worth noting that Thomas wasn't the only disciple who had periods of weakness in their faith towards Christ. Peter doubts that Christ will sustain him walking on water in Matthew 14:28-31 and begins sinking until Christ raises him.

To have moments of doubt is not what we desire, but it is human.

The idea isn't that you will never question, but instead that you find your footing in your faith, your prayerful relationship with God, and with your Christian family. God is always there for help in our moments of weakness or doubt.

Doubt will confront us often during our life's journey in faith. When we become more experienced in our relationship with God, we will struggle less, **but we will, at time, still struggle.**

Faith isn't a “one and done event” in our lives, and needs constant nurturing, it requires prayer, it requires that we cleanse our hearts of the distractions that infect our lives.

Like allowing ground to go fallow, good things can grow from our moments of doubt. For Thomas it gave him the opportunity to find out whether he truly wanted to believe or not. Thomas kept showing up in the community of the faithful; even when he wasn't feeling faithful, **he practiced being faithful.**

Sometimes, in our moments of doubt, our motivations and intentions are revealed. Are we still seeking and longing for God in the midst of those doubts?

Secondly, Thomas's doubt experience creates a new and important moment for belief. When Jesus does come to Thomas, it is noteworthy **that Jesus says, "stop doubting and believe."** These are Jesus's words; and **only he can say them.**

When the church attempts to say, **"stop doubting and believe"** it may come across as ridicule, shame, or makes the doubter feel "othered." **From Christ, it is an invitation. One that we humans can only discover through our honest, prayerful and thoughtful conversations with Christ.**

Thirdly, Thomas had the opportunity to be welcomed into the believing community for that week. The other disciples roll out the red carpet of hospitality as they await Jesus to come back again. Indeed, before it was even written, they were practicing Jude 22: **"Be merciful to those who doubt."**

Who was Thomas?? What happened to him after this story??

Can someone tell us where did the Apostle Thomas died?

The answer is India.

He died while forming the Christian church in India.

That church didn't end when he died. Thomas was martyred and then buried at St Thomas Mount, in the Mylapore neighborhood of Madras (Chennai).

Christianity is India's third-largest religion with 28 million adherents.

Thomas may have had doubts, and questioned the resurrected Christ, but he found his faith, and he served Christ and his message.

All of us should see Thomas as a sign of our own redemption, he falls, and then is caught by Christ, and becomes Christ's dutiful servant.

My wife will assuredly tell you that when she first met me, the possibility of me standing in front of you preaching Christ's message of salvation, was not high on her list of probabilities. Christ however was always there waiting for me and probably knowing that eventually I would come seeking him.

God seems to collect us even when we are unlikely candidates.

Next week we will talk about one of the least likely who came to Christ; Paul. Here was a man who had assaulted Christians throughout the various Christian communities; arrested them, imprisoned them, tortured them.

Christ however went explicitly after his conversion. Perhaps the most dramatic conversion story ever.

There are few passages in the Bible I love as much as Romans Chapter 5 verses 1 – 8. Paul is exceptional here in his writing, and the King James Version captures this most eloquently:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

And hope makes us not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for us all, the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Here Paul has laid the entire story out for us; Christ's sacrifice and our salvation, our strength in his love, our faith and it's importance.

Faith is what makes this relationship with Christ work, and it is the first verse of this chapter in Romans.

We may find our moments of doubt, but **he** will always be waiting for us, knowing we will seek him.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father,

Doubt often shakes the foundation of my faith. Help me trust in You wholeheartedly, even when circumstances seem bleak. Renew my faith, Lord, and remind me of Your unchanging love. I choose to place my confidence in You, for You are the source of all things good. Thank You for your steadfastness, for in Your constancy, my faith finds renewed vigor.

Amen.