

A Doubting Disciple
(Turnpike Wesleyan - April 18, 2021)

Scripture Reading: John 20:24-29 (NLT)

One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.” Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!” “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven’t seen me and believe anyway.”

Introduction

Some people truly have difficulty in believing in or dealing with the **unexplainable** ... the **miraculous**. Today we are going to talk about a disciple who had a hard time accepting Christ’s resurrection from the dead. We all know his name as “**Doubting Thomas**.”

“Doubting Thomas.” If you look up this phrase in the dictionary, you’ll find something like: “one who **habitually** or **instinctively** doubts or questions.” A “doubting Thomas” is somebody who always **lags behind** in matters of faith.

Well today I am going to come to the defense of “doubting Thomas.” Believe it or not, I’m going to suggest in this sermon that you and I need to be more like Thomas, not by **doubting** more, but by being more **honest** with God and with each other.

Thomas was like the man recorded in Mark 9:24 who says, “I believe, help my unbelief.” The reason I say this is that Thomas’ doubt did not **drive** him away from **truth** - it challenged him to **seek** out the **truth**.

Historical Setting

The historical setting was Jesus’ mission of proclaiming that He was the **Redeemer** and that the **kingdom** of God was at hand.

He assembled around him a group of close followers who came to believe that he was the **Messiah** who would save Israel. Through Jesus, they thought, Israel would finally be set free from the heavy hand of **Rome** and God would once again rule over his free people.

But all of these hopes came crashing down when Jesus was arrested, tried before a kangaroo court, and sentenced by the Roman governor to death by **crucifixion**. For the disciples of Jesus, his death wasn't merely a horrific execution of a dear friend. It was the end of their **vision**, the **passion** in which they had invested years of their lives.

But then, on Easter morning, some women claimed that the tomb where Jesus had been buried was **empty**, and that they had even seen him alive. And that evening, while Thomas was away from the group, Jesus **appeared** to the other disciples. When he returned, they excitedly reported to him: "We've seen the Lord."

But Thomas didn't share their joy or confidence. He said to his fellow disciples, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side." There you have it: **doubting Thomas**.

Application

Can you relate to Thomas at all? I know some of you can. You went out on a limb. You trusted God. You tried to live as a good Christian, to do the right things, when all of a sudden, your **life** fell apart: your **marriage** disintegrated, or you got **cancer**, or you lost your **job**, or your **teenager** got heavy into drugs, or . . . you fill in the blank.

Or maybe you connect with Thomas because, like him, you struggle to **completely** believe in Jesus. You can relate to Thomas as one who stands on the **edge** of faith, **peering** in.

Whether Thomas should have believed or not, at least he was bluntly **honest** about where he was. He didn't pretend. He didn't **fake** his Christianity or lack of it.

If you're struggling with doubt today, don't pretend. Doubt is a **natural** part of the faith journey of many, many Christians.

If you're doubting, be an "**honest** Thomas." First, tell the **Lord** about it. Don't hold back in your prayers. God can handle your doubt.

Second, if you're struggling with doubt, you can be an "honest Thomas" by sharing it with **others** whom you can **trust**. To use an expression, "**borrow** from their faith."

Church family, in his time and in his way, Jesus comes to us and makes himself **known** to us. Sometimes he does it in the way we have wanted. Sometimes he doesn't. But he always gives us exactly what we really **need**. And it comes, not because we've earned it, but by **grace**.

This is where **honesty** with God leads. This is the outcome of an open **confession** of doubt. This is not pretend faith. This is not the sort of Christianity we wear as a **costume**

to impress others. It's a 100% genuine faith that issues from the deepest recesses of our soul. It's a faith that **transforms** our lives.

Wrap Up

Friends, no matter where we are in our relationship with Jesus today, the good news is that he meets us in that **place**. In his time and his way, he graciously draws us near to his **heart** so we might know his love and grace.

He wants, not just a **religious** performance, but an intimate **friendship**.