



Sermon 18.04.2021

Doubting Thomas

When we walk into a church building and sing the hymns and worship songs, pray, and have conversations concerning our walk with Jesus we try our very best to give the impression that we believe and never doubt God as our Lord. And yet in the valleys and on the mountaintops, we have moments when the Devil plants seeds of doubt into our minds and as a result we sometimes question not only the path God wants us to take in life but also our salvation and His very existence!

Do you ever have doubts? I think if we are honest, we all do at sometime or another, and it can be for the most of mundane reasons. The dictionary puts it this way 'it is a feeling of not being certain about something. Especially of not knowing if it is true or not.' As our reading this morning clearly shows.

Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them the first time, we don't know why he wasn't there, the Bible doesn't tell us, but could it have been one of those times when Jesus wanted to show us something.

The thing was is that Thomas was really upset upon hearing that the others had witnessed Jesus' return, he couldn't believe that his master would have come back when he wasn't there. So, he demanded that he be shown proof. Of course, the other disciples couldn't prove that Jesus had appeared to them, Thomas could only take their word for it, so he told them that if he couldn't see him and put his finger into the nail mark and his hand in his side, he wouldn't believe them. This could be where we get the phrase 'seeing is believing' from.

The question we should ask ourselves is was Thomas's 'doubting' the sign of weakness or the sign of faithfulness? And wanting to know the truth and facts. Is he in fact any different to us?

Thomas had an inquiring mind, he was always asking questions, and he is mentioned in John's gospel 3 times. The first time is when Lazarus has died and Jesus is discussing going back to raise him, but the last few time they had been in Judea the Jews had tried to kill them. So, the disciples were not too keen on going, and in John 11v 16 Thomas says to the rest of the disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him'. You see he knew enough about Jesus to know that no matter what the disciples thought Jesus was going to go back there even if it meant the end of His life.

Thomas was willing to follow Jesus even if it meant his own death. He was putting into action the teachings of Christ that we find in Mark 8:34-35 "If anyone would come after me; he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whomever wants to save his life will lose it, but whomever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

This speaks of a man of courage not of doubting.

The second time John mentions Thomas is in chapter 14 where Jesus is explaining about what heaven is like,

1"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. 2In my fathers house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you may also be where I am. 4You know the way to the place where I am going. 5Thomas said



to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one come to the Father except through me."

Wow. One of the most famous statements in Christianity from the 'I am' speeches was said to Thomas, out of a feeling of uncertainty. Thomas knew that if Jesus was going to go away, he wanted to go with him, so he was very honest in the question that he asked 'I don't know the way but I sure want to follow. Tell me how?' Not only was he so passionate about going with Christ and sticking with his Lord, but he also sought out a deeper truth and asked a question that brings out a reply that really is at the heart of Christianity.

And then we come to the reading of this morning John 20 v 24-30. The one time that has Thomas stuck with the label of 'doubting Thomas'.

All because he hadn't been there when Jesus first appeared to the disciples. So does this show a lack of faith in Jesus by Thomas? it could be possible for us to think so, as it is at least a week before Jesus appears to the disciples again. Thomas's reaction to the risen Christ is also very insightful as he addresses him as GOD. He says, "My Lord and my God." Powerful truth that comes out of Thomas here. He knew that when he saw the risen Lord that he truly was encountering God.

But I also think that this was another way of Jesus teaching us he is God. By letting Thomas see the nail marks in his hands and putting his hand in His side, and then saying, v 29 *Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*

He is declaring that he knows at times we really can identify with Thomas. We all have doubts and no-one's word is good enough but we need to know for ourselves. After all what faith is greater: the one that never doubts or the faith that doubts and investigates and believes.

So, when we have doubts or when we hear about doubting Thomas let us remember that he was so much more than a doubter but rather was the one who needed to find out for himself, needed to search for the truth, needed to believe, not because of other peoples words but because of God himself revealing it to him. We can trust others but let us search. Let us be like Thomas in his dedication to Christ, in his desire to really know for himself this risen Lord.

Amen