

## **Series Introduction**

Two weeks ago we started a new series leading up to Easter. The resurrection lies at the heart of the Christian faith.

In all we will look at five sets of post resurrection appearances.

In the first week we looked at Resurrection Morning. As we were reminded, we believe in a Risen saviour there is no situation beyond His power to resurrect. The power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us.

Last week we were to have a visiting speaker but at the last minute he was unable to come. Susan stepped in and did a brilliant job. If you missed it then you need to listen to it and you can do so on our website or ask Mick for a CD. Susan gave an insight into what it meant for the disciples to meet the risen Jesus who came to them when their hopes had been dashed and brought them peace. Not a promise of a life without suffering but a call to peace in the midst of all our trials as Jesus walks with us in them.

Today we are reminded of the Thomas, the man that wasn't there the day the risen Jesus came to the prayer meeting.

## **Reading**

John 20:24-31

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' 27 Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' 28 Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' 29 Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' 30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

## **Introduction**

Thomas generally gets a bad press. He is labelled doubting Thomas, as if he doubted more than any of the other disciples. Actually, Thomas was brave, loyal and level-headed. We do not know much about him but I want to convince you that he is someone to be thankful for. He should definitely appeal to the scientists among us.

When Lazarus had died and Jesus spoke about going to Judea raise him back to life the other disciples said 'But Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?'

Like Jesus may have forgotten that they tried to stone him!

Thomas said 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

Thomas is my kind of guy. He is no less convinced than the other disciples that Jesus will die if He goes back to Judea but his attitude is – OK let's go die with Him.

His bravery is not the rash bravery of Peter caught up in the emotion of the moment, it is the steady bravery of commitment in the face of what looks like certain defeat.

Next when Thomas does not believe or understand he says so. Hear his response to Jesus' teaching about life after death.

14 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.'

5 Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'

6 Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'

So, without Thomas we would not have heard Jesus response – I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

### **Exposition**

This brings us to today's passage. Thomas was not there when Jesus appeared to the disciples. Perhaps he wasn't invited. Perhaps, like the two on the road to Emmaus, he had given up hope when Jesus died and could not face being with those whom Jesus' loved. Maybe he just popped out for some milk. We just don't know.

The disciples who did meet with Jesus tell him what they have seen and heard. He doesn't believe them, any more than they believed the women when they had seen Jesus and they had not. It is really important to recognise that the gospel writers keep on driving home that the disciples did not expect Jesus to rise again nor did they believe it when others told them they had seen Jesus. The disciples were down to earth people who knew Jesus had died.

How do you think Thomas felt over the next week? Did the other disciples keep trying to convince Him? Did he feel left out? Second class? Why didn't Jesus come until a whole week later?

All questions we to which we do not know the answer. But let me ask you one I think we do know the answer to. Will Thomas be at church the next week?

He was and he was not disappointed. Jesus said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

We do not know if Thomas followed through on his demand to put his finger in the wounds of Christ but here is something we do know – Jesus knew every word Thomas had said even though Jesus was not physically present when Thomas said it. Jesus addresses Thomas directly and personally. Thomas was told to stop doubting and believe. His response is typically Thomas. Once convinced he is all-in. He declares Jesus to be “My Lord and My God.”

### **Application**

We, of course, are in the position of Thomas the day before he met the risen Jesus. Others have seen and spoken with Jesus and they have reported this to us. We can be like Thomas and refuse to believe it until we meet the risen Lord personally or we can learn from Thomas' experience and stop doubting and believe. Jesus promise is “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”.

John adds at this point, “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

I think he says this, at this precise point, not at the end of the gospel, because Thomas is the image of the person who moves from unbelief not simply to belief but to worship. We are invited to do the same on the basis of John's gospel. It is a personal invitation address to “you” the reader or hearer to stop doubting and believe and have life.

### **Response**

When God seems to do amazing things for everyone else. When God moves powerfully the Sunday we miss. When others are overflowing with the Spirit. When other people get healed or have a prophetic word from God, or testify how God led them to their spouse, it can be hard for those who are still seeking, still trusting.

The good news in this passage is that Jesus hears us and He will address us directly.

The path from unbelief to worship is not a miracle it is a choice – stop doubting and believe.

But note well, the belief is not in the miracle it is in Jesus. In who He is. In what He has done. In how He feels about you.

He may or may not perform the miracle you are seeking but He will come to you personally and challenge you with the very words you have spoken about Him.

Whatever your situation today I challenge you to respond by a decision, a choice to worship your Lord and your God – Jesus Christ.