

Thomas

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Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. I'm reading from the book of John this morning. It's actually the last chapter and the last half of that chapter at the end of the book. It's John chapter 20 verses 19 through 21.

On the evening of that first day of the week when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said peace be with you. After he said this he showed them his hands and sighed. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord and again Jesus said peace be with you. As the father has sent me I am sending you and with that he breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins their sins are forgiven. If you do not forgive them they are not forgiven.

Now Thomas also known as Didymus one of the twelve was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 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 fingers where the nails were and put my hand into his side I will not believe.

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. Then he said to Thomas put your fingers here see my hands reach out your hand and put it into my side stop doubting and believe.

Thomas said to him my Lord and my God. Then Jesus told him because you have seen me you have believed.

[1 : 5 7] Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. 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.

This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. I give you thanks for today. Thanks for this moment and thanks for your presence here.

And now Lord with our hearts open having offered you praise having heard your word and having prayed. Lord God move in each of us. Plant a seed in us that will grow and bear fruit for the honor and glory of your name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen. So we continue our Easter journey as you heard me say during the greeting in this series called Living the Resurrection. And during that opening time I asked you Do we sometimes struggle to learn new things?

And heads are nodding again which is good. That's very reassuring for me. But struggling to learn things happens, right? But even with those struggles I want you to think about something that rides along with it. We may struggle to learn some new things but I bet there's something that you're probably really good at.

Every single one of us has at least one or two of those things that we're really good at. Don't be shy. That's okay. Everybody being modest now. Okay. Not nearly the same number of nods we had at the first question.

[3 : 39] But that's okay. But that thing you're great at. Whatever it is. There was probably a time in your life where you weren't so great at it. You probably had to take the journey to get better.

And that's truth. That's normal. That's okay. Now the reason why I wanted you to think about both is because wherever you started with the thing you're good at and even if you had to struggle a little bit to get better even if you had to work at it and even if sometimes it's hard you got there.

And that's an important lesson for us to learn. That's an important thing for us to remember because even though we have those moments and even though we struggle that shows us that we can get there.

Now having said all that it's an interesting thing to think about learning in that way. As I heard a colleague talk about learning one time and described it like this.

Said in order to really learn something you've got to think of yourself as sort of standing kind of on this cliff or maybe in front of this huge sort of forest. And the thing is what you've got to do is you've got to step into this unknown.

[5 : 03] Right? So if you're like on this place that's comfortable for you you know how it works and it's all solid and it makes sense to you. But if you're going to go someplace new that ground isn't nearly as steady.

And it gets completely kind of mysterious. It has to be, right? By definition because if you knew it and understood it already you wouldn't be learning something.

It has to be an unknown. Right? It can't be something you already understand otherwise it's not new knowledge. But you have to be willing to take that step.

And that step freezes a lot of people. It's scary because this represents the known. And that's a whole lot less fear.

That's a whole lot less complicated. You have some sense of how the world works from there. But that cliff that forest or wild whatever you want to call it kind of past where we're comfortable.

[6 : 12] I want us to think about that because that's what we're dealing with today. When we hear the story of Thomas and we see what he goes through Thomas is the perfect example of why we need to take that journey.

Now we don't usually talk about Thomas like that and that's one of the reasons why I wanted us to make sure we did this today. Because we always think of him as doubting Thomas.

He's earned this nickname. And we tend to beat him up a little bit in the church. Because Thomas turns into one of those stories and one of those people who we get to sort of do that finger wag thing at.

We hear the story and we go see you shouldn't do that. Don't be like him. Problem is is we should all be exactly like him. If you pay attention to the story we should be exactly like Thomas and that's what we're going to spend some time doing today.

See here's the thing. When you look at this particular journey that we're on it shows us how Jesus works in our lives.

[7 : 22] Especially with our questions and our doubts. And the story is a good news story. It's not a problem story. So let's talk about what happens to Thomas.

Thomas is one of the twelve. Everybody who's been in church for a minute knows that. He's one of the twelve. But we enter into this story in this funky place.

Because it's Resurrection Sunday. Okay? That's the setting. It's Resurrection Sunday. Now Mary and Peter and John have already had their morning adventure at the tomb.

and Mary's come back to the house and told the disciples I have seen the Lord. And we pick up right after that.

So what you heard Louis read is that this is later in the day. So there's been a few presumably hours since Mary came and shared her news. Now for whatever reason Thomas is not here when Jesus shows up.

[8 : 29] We have no idea why Thomas isn't there. But he's not. So whether it's just the ten who are there or whether it's a larger group of disciples what's clear is Thomas isn't there.

Now when I say ten remember a couple details. Thomas is out for whatever reason and Judas is already off the team. Okay. So those ten and probably more that's much more likely there's probably the women and others that are also present.

So Jesus shows up miraculously and reveals himself as risen to the disciples. Not only does he reveal himself he gifts them and gives them authority as well as shares the Holy Spirit with him.

This has got to be a pretty powerful moment. Now Thomas comes back and so everybody in the house is we have seen the Lord.

Now put yourself in Thomas' shoes for a minute. how would you feel about this? There's any number of words we could use some of which we probably shouldn't say in church but there's any number of words.

[10 : 01] Now Thomas has got to be hurting here. That's the word that comes to mind for me first. He's got to be hurting because of a few things but those things that are on Thomas' mind are not just feelings they're feelings that ride along with his questions because at a minimum some pretty powerful questions have to come up about this.

Right? And so because he says that famous line that we all know right? But that comes from this place of question so if you're not familiar with the line I'm talking about if you want to follow along go to John chapter 20 in your Bible and we're going to look at verse 24 verse 24 okay John chapter 20 verse 24 now Thomas also known as Didymus one of the twelve was not with the disciples when Jesus came 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 so he's made his declaration this is not making sense to him he's got questions right pretty serious questions not to mention all those feelings that must be riding along with having those questions so those questions have to hit on every level just kind of the basic question which is well how does that even happen

I mean people don't rise from the dead which is a fascinating thing for the disciples to say because they've seen Jesus do this already they've seen him do it three times because he raised Jairus daughter he raised the son of the widow of Nain and of course he raised Lazarus so they've seen him do this already but there's still all this confusion the one that kind of sticks with me is Thomas has to think everybody done lost their mind right because I know there's times it felt like I left the house and came back and everybody lost their mind but this is clearly one example of that because he goes out to do whatever he's going to do now I want you to remember something very clearly about this when Mary shows up and tells the disciples that she has seen the Lord there's a key piece that gets skipped in the book of John which is that the disciples do not believe her they do not believe her right that's testified to in other gospels but they don't believe her so everybody's in the room maybe scratching their head or wondering what she was talking about or all that sort of thing now Thomas presumably is in that conversation but he leaves and he comes back and guess what we have seen the

Lord and you wonder what happens when I leave the house right because that is not where I left things so what is going on here there's deeper peace though and this is the peace that I really feel for Thomas because Thomas as one of the twelve would understand certain things about Jesus he would know that Jesus is the son of God he would have his own set of belief in his heart not only is Jesus the son of God Jesus is God the son Jesus is the Messiah Jesus has unlimited power Jesus has unlimited knowledge and if we understand that why would he come when I wasn't here because he would know

I wasn't there why would he come with me not in the room that has got to be crushing for Thomas because you don't know what that means maybe Jesus is trying to tell me something maybe I did something and made Jesus mad but Jesus doesn't make mistakes and because Jesus doesn't make mistakes he knew that when he showed up that I would be gone and still he showed up not only did he show up when I was gone he showed up and did something pretty fantastic apparently because he shared the Holy Spirit and gave them authority to forgive sins and

[15 : 36] I wasn't there why would he do that and so all this is swirling around in Thomas his heart all this is swirling around in his mind and then you know you're getting the story so maybe there's this part of him that's really wrestling with this idea that well people don't rise from the dead and maybe he thinks maybe y'all saw something but I doubt it was resurrection remember the doors were locked and all those sorts of pieces so maybe if you saw a ghost that's cool but a risen savior that's something else that he's back after crucifixion I'm really struggling with that hence if I'm really going to believe that he's risen unless I put my finger where the nails were unless

I put it into his side I will not believe so this is a deeper issue more complicated set of questions and so he's stuck and here's where this gets really rough is because as you hear the story progress we know that there's this week that happens so there's this conversation among everybody who had this experience with Jesus and Thomas who didn't have it how are you feeling now if you're Thomas what must that have been like now the reason why I want us to make sure we are in this space with Thomas and feeling what he feels and understanding what he must be up against is to appreciate the lesson because we know what happens the following

Sunday is Jesus shows up and when Jesus shows up he meets Thomas exactly where he's at meets him exactly where he's at like he shows up and he greets everyone and immediately goes to him put your finger here friends here's what you need to hear the deeper thing that you might be struggling with in your own journey what's the question you have for Jesus today what's the thing that's stuck in your mind what's the thing that's stuck in your gut because you are struggling with something Jesus has done or something Jesus has tried to relay or something you see happening around you in the world and you are stuck because maybe somebody shared how wonderful Jesus healing is but you're still struggling with your thing somebody shared how amazing

Jesus grace is but you're still struggling with your guilt and sin somebody has talked about how amazing Jesus can be when he directs your path and you're walking in your call and all those sorts of kinds of confident things that people who profess Jesus will say about he's never left me I've never felt alone or my heart has been healed and all that brokenness that I knew in the back is gone now and you're like I don't feel that at all or maybe the world has put some other things in your mind about well I don't understand how or how or why God would have done this or why God does things this way question after question after question and so you're stuck but stuck is exactly where we were talking about a minute ago you are right up against the edge and there's an unknown in front of you would you be willing to take the step that

Jesus is calling you to take because that's where you stand because if you can do that then that unknown that you're wrestling with that doubt that's stuck in you Jesus is ready to address but you have to be willing to take the step Jesus won't make you take the step you have to take it and that's the hard part because think about what Thomas is at Thomas could be sitting there going okay and he has wrestled for all these days with this can't possibly be true and I don't know what these guys are talking about and dealing with all those questions and issues that are stirred up inside of him but here comes Jesus will you receive what he's trying to give you because it's going to be hard to believe because that's the

[21 : 33] God part if it was easy if it made sense if it was just that easy to grasp it wouldn't have the God stuff in it but that's the God stuff and can we open our minds and our hearts and our spirits to receive what God is trying to do will we let him draw us further in will you let us take us further on the path see because that's how we deal with doubt so because this doubt thing is real as we said all of us didn't get to this place in our faith without working at it that there were always questions there were always things we had to learn there were things we never understood there were things we still struggle to believe all of that is part of a faith journey but the good news is that that shouldn't keep you from taking the journey and what you and and what you hear in this story is not a

God who says how dare you have questioned me he doesn't say that he doesn't kick him off the team for having a question what does Jesus say put your finger here he meets him where he is Jesus can handle your questions Jesus can handle your doubts he's not afraid of them in fact he welcomes them because he understands it's only by having those questions by asking them by wrestling with them by having that dialogue with them and working on it that you will continue to keep moving forward that's the only way he's okay with that the problem is is that we sometimes aren't okay with it because it's too easy to stay where we are because it's comfortable and it's easy and if we've been hurt sometimes it's easier to just stop and sit in our hurt than it is to try and work on our hurt sometimes we'd rather sit here and just be mad at

God than actually try and work it out with God but that's us it's not him so are we willing to let him bring us forward are we open to what he's trying to show us because if Thomas couldn't handle the idea of a risen savior would he have become who he became if he had just chosen to stay stuck where he was and say nope people don't rise or maybe y'all saw something but it wasn't a risen savior what if he closed his mind to it fortunately for us and that is the blessing is that that is not who our God is so again I ask you what is the thing that you are struggling with what is the question that is keeping you from moving forward in your faith because the good news is is that

Jesus is ready to meet you too it will look different because your question is different where Thomas named his well unless I put my finger there Jesus says well put your finger here but if your question is a different question his response is going to have to be different but what you have to do is be willing to listen and be willing to respond however he responds to you but that's who he is that can be downright scary sometimes but the key is that he is worth it he is worth it and hear this again because we started this conversation with talking about how far we've come in learning things that there was this thing that we now are pretty good at that we didn't know before maybe it's fixing cars or baking a pie or playing an instrument whatever it is but there was a time you started you didn't know how to do it at all and now you're pretty good at it and you had the trial and error you messed up a few times but now you are where you are imagine if you tried that in your walk in faith and let him bring you along because that's what he wants to do doubt he can handle giving up he can't make sure that wherever you are right now today you lay that question before him and watch him work because he is ready to meet you where you are put your finger there amen and amen loving and gracious

God we thank you for the gift it is that you call us to grow you call us to continue on the journey with you that even when it's scary and it's unknown you are prepared to meet us that sometimes what you do is so big and so amazing to us we can't possibly process it or comprehend it sometimes your love is so big and so wide we can't accept the fact that we are truly forgiven that death has no power that there's nothing left in this world that can touch us in our truest deepest self as long as we are walking with you Lord God when we start to have those doubts when something is just too hard for us to understand or the world has crept a lie into our spirit let us be courageous in our faith let us trust that you would not bring us to the edge of this cliff and then let us fall that you are prepared to meet us that you are prepared to answer our questions and that the ground under our feet is far more sure than we ever possibly imagined because your love is that powerful because your power is that limitless because you are always who you say you will be so we come with our questions with our doubts and we follow as best we know how knowing that you would never let us fall behind amen be the day the day you start a different journey trusting that God will meet you where you are no matter what questions or challenges you may bring as you go into the world this week no matter what may be on your mind you can put your faith into practice in a variety of ways tough stuff is this coming

[29 : 31] Tuesday so if you are interested in wrestling with hard questions in a safe place and in a safe way that Bible study meets at 7 on Tuesday and we'll be taking on another tough topic trust me it's okay bring who you are where you are and we will journey together we have our regular Bible studies on Thursday that'll be meeting as well the third day Bible study you don't have to have been for the previous weeks of the book in order to pick up where we are all are welcome if you'd like to join us want to highlight the rummage and bake sale which is coming up next Saturday you can start bringing your goods in tomorrow if you have things to donate but also there are opportunities to serve in other ways if you didn't see that make sure you stop at the sign up table on your way out so you can offer whether or not you're bringing a bake good or you're going to help as a volunteer and lastly we are still looking for someone to take over the leadership of that inside out ministry if you have questions about that make sure you see DJ on your way out and you can discuss it further that said your bulletin is a resource please use it read up on all the opportunities you have to serve let's receive our blessing today

Lord God we are so grateful that you meet us where we are thank you for continuing to draw us further on the journey as we seek to follow no matter what challenges or questions we may bring now in the name of God our King and creator in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior and in the name of the Holy Spirit our advocate and our sustainer may God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children and all God's people said Amen