

**Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>**  
**“Faith and Doubt”**  
**John 20:24-31**

*John 20:25 (Thomas said)... "Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won't believe it." (The Message)*

**I. Faith and Doubt.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Your Doubts.

*John 20:25 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 it."*

*Matthew 11:2-3 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples<sup>[31]</sup> to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"*

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Your Doubts.

*John 20:26-28 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!"<sup>[27]</sup> 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."<sup>[28]</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

*Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Where you Are.

*John 20:29-31 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 did many other miraculous 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 Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

*Mark 9:24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

*Matthew 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

*(Answers: 1. I. Admit. 2. Doubt. 3.Begin.)*

**□ Day #1--Monday, April, 20<sup>th</sup> Read: John 20:19-23.**

This week we will explore the days following the resurrection of Jesus and how the disciples were impacted by this cataclysmic event, particularly Thomas. We will also hear from Martin Luther as he comments on the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

There were at least five Resurrection appearances of our Lord on that first Easter day; Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11–18), the other women (Matthew 28:8–10), Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5 and Luke 24:34), the two Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13–32), and the disciples minus Thomas (John 20:19–25). The next Sunday, the disciples met again and Thomas was with them (John 20:26–31). Clearly, it was already becoming the habit of the disciples to meet together on Sundays. This day, Sunday, came to be called “the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10). In the future, the church would meet and worship on Sunday, in antiquity, the first day of the week to learn all that Jesus had taught and to commemorate His death and resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2). This would become the Christian Sabbath. The change in observing the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day was not the result of some ecclesial decree; rather, it was the natural consequences of a community that had seen the risen Jesus and knows that because he defeated death, Jesus is God. God’s future “new day” had arrived early through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

“We must note in the first place that Christ by his suffering not only saved us from the devil, death, and sin, but also that his suffering is an example, which we are to follow in our suffering...For God has appointed that we should not only believe in the crucified Christ, but also be crucified with him, as he clearly shows...in the Gospels: ‘If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household’ (Matt. 10:25). Martin Luther, “*Sermon on Cross and Suffering*,” Preached at Coburg (1530) LW 51, 198-99.

## □ Day #2--Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup> Read: John 20:24-28; Romans 4:25

Why was Thomas not with the other disciples when they met on the evening of Easter? Was he so disappointed that he did not want to be with the other disciples, his friends? It is sad, but usually true, that when we go through difficult times in our lives of faith, we cut-off from the very Christian community that we need the most! Solitude only feeds discouragement and helps it grow into self-pity, which is even more self-defeating. Because Thomas was not there, he missed seeing Jesus Christ, hearing His words of peace, and receiving His commission and gift of spiritual life. He had to endure a week of fear and doubt when he could have been experiencing joy and peace! Remember Thomas when you are tempted to stay home from church☺ You never know what special blessing you might miss! Maybe Thomas was afraid? But John 11:16 seems to indicate that he was basically a courageous man, willing to go to Judea and die with the Lord! John 14:5 reveals that Thomas was a spiritually minded man who wanted to know the truth and was not ashamed to ask questions. Maybe Thomas was just a pessimistic kind of person? He has been labeled “Doubting Thomas,” but Jesus did not rebuke him for his doubts. Jesus rebuked him for unbelief. Unbelief is very different from doubting. Doubt is often an intellectual problem: we want to believe, but we are often overwhelmed by problems and/or questions. Unbelief is a refusal to believe—no matter what!

“Now we come to the resurrection of Christ, to the day of Easter. After a person has contemplated the passion and cross of Christ and has thus become aware of his sin and is terrified in his heart, he must watch that sin does not remain in his conscience...But if you behold your sin resting on Christ and see it overcome by his resurrection, and then boldly believe this, even it is dead and nullified...” Martin Luther, “*A Meditation on Christ’s Passion*” (1519) LW 42, 12.

□ **Day #3--Wednesday, April, 22<sup>nd</sup> Read Again: John 20:24-28**

What was it that Thomas would not believe? It was the reports from the other disciples that Jesus was alive. The Greek verb in John 20:25 which is translated, “*said*,” means that the disciples “kept on saying to him.” In other words, they were so excited about seeing Jesus they could stop talking about it! What Thomas wants is personal experience. On the one hand, that is ok. While we have all heard about Jesus from others (parents, family members, friends, pastors, teachers) we ultimately must choose for ourselves to follow Jesus. While Thomas missed out on what would have been a week of joy and peace (see above), at least he showed up the next week. The other ten disciples likely has told Thomas that when Jesus appeared, Jesus had shown them his hands and side (John 20:20).

Consequently, Thomas made that the test for hi: show me your hands and side!” “Thomas’ demands in v.25b are worded graphically, and the demand for concrete evidence is heightened by his insistence on touching Jesus’ hands and side, but in essence what he demands as the conditions of his belief, tangible proof of the resurrection, is what Jesus himself gave the disciples in v. 20” (Gail R. O’Day, “The Gospel of John” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*).

“Behold Jesus Christ, the King of glory, rising from the dead. Here the heart can find its supreme joy and lasting possessions. Here there is not the slightest trace of evil, for ‘Christ being risen from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer has dominion over him.’...He has destroyed sin and raised up righteousness, abolished death and restored life, conquered hell and bestowed everlasting glory on us.” Martin Luther, “*Fourteen Consolations*” (1520) LW 42, 163-64.

□ **Day #4--Thursday, April, 23<sup>rd</sup> Read: John 20:27-29**

John 20:29 indicates that Thomas’ testimony did not come from his *touching* Jesus, but from his *seeing* Jesus. “My Lord and my God!” is the last of the testimonies that John records to the deity of Jesus Christ. The others are from: John the Baptist (John 1:34); Nathanael (John 1:49); Jesus Himself (John 5:25; 10:36); Peter (John 6:69); the healed blind man (John 9:35-38); Martha (John 11:27); and, of course, John himself (John 20:30–31). It is an awesome thing that Jesus had a personal interest in and concern for Thomas. Jesus wanted to strengthen his faith and include him in the blessings that lay in store for His followers. Jesus’ words in v. 27b translate literally, “Stop becoming faithless but become a believer.” We need to remind ourselves that everybody lives by faith. The difference is in the *object* of that faith. Christians put their faith in God and His Word; others will put their faith in something else.

“You must not judge by external appearances. You must be guided by the word, which promises and gives you everlasting life. Then you truly have eternal life...Go ahead and die in God’s name. You are still assured of eternal life; it will surely be yours. To die, to be buried, to have people tread on your grave, to be consumed by worms—all this will not matter to you. It is certain that Christ will raise you up again. For here you have his promise: ‘I will raise you up.’” Martin Luther, “*Sermons on the Gospel of John*” (1530-32) LW23, 131.

□ **Day #5--Friday, April, 24<sup>th</sup> Read: John 20:29-31**

John could not end his book without bringing the Resurrection miracle to his future readers (you and me). While we often look at Thomas and the other disciples and wish we could have walked with Jesus, John reminds us that because of the resurrection people in *every* age could and can know that Jesus is God and that faith in Him brings everlasting life. It is not necessary to “see” Jesus Christ in order to believe. Yes, it was a blessing for the early Christians to see their Lord and know that He was alive; but that is not what saved them. They were saved, not by seeing, but by believing. The

emphasis throughout the Gospel of John is on *believing*. There are nearly 100 references in John citing “believing on Jesus Christ.” You and I today cannot see Jesus. However, the witness to Jesus is recorded by John and the other gospel writers. As Paul reminds us: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). As you read John’s witness, you come face to face with Jesus Christ, how He lived, what He taught, and what He did. All of the evidence points to the conclusion that He is indeed God come in the flesh, the Savior of the world, and loves you with an everlasting love!

“Thus the weak should be buoyed up with these words: ‘Do you not think that he will live up to what he has said?’ Thus Christ gives the consolation in Luke 12:32 ‘Fear not, O little flock.’...Thus he says in John 14:1-2: ‘Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father’s house, do not doubt. Eternal life is promised to you. It is a grand thing, but do not fear.’” Martin Luther, “*Lectures on Titus*” (1527) LW 29, 11-12.

### □ Day #6--Saturday, April, 25<sup>th</sup> Read Again: John 20:30-31

The “signs” that John selected and described in his gospel are proof of the deity of Jesus. However, as “signs,” they point beyond themselves to the person of Jesus Christ. Human beings are not saved by believing in miracles; they are saved by believing in Jesus Christ. Great crowds followed Him because of His miracles (John 6:2); but in the end, most of them left Him and never came back (John 6:66). Even the religious leaders who plotted His death believed that He did miracles, but this “faith” did not save them (John 11:47ff). Reading about and believing in, Jesus’ miracles, the “signs,” should lead to faith in Jesus himself. Jesus himself pointed out that faith in His works (miracles) was but *the first step* toward faith in the Word of God (John 5:36–40). There was no need for John to describe every story about Jesus or every miracle that Jesus performed; in fact, John supposed that a complete record could never be written (John 21:25). What was/is necessary to know and believe is there in the Word of God.

What the Gospel of John is about and what John is concerned to reveal is the truth that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” In John’s gospel, John presents the “3 ‘W’'s” of Jesus: Jesus’ works, Jesus’ walk, and Jesus’ words. Jesus performs works no one else could do, lived a life that blessed the marginalized and angered enemies; and He spoke words that nobody else could speak. AS C.S. Lewis was quoted as saying: “Either Jesus was a liar, lunatic, or he was Lord.” In the Bible, those who believed Jesus was Lord had their lives transformed forever. The same is true today. Jesus claimed to be God come in the flesh, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. What do you believe?

“What is it that he has wrought by his resurrection?...I am a sinner, but I am borne by his righteousness, which is given to me. I am unclean, but his holiness is my sanctification, in which I ride gently. I am an ignorant fool, but his wisdom carries me forward. I deserve condemnation, but I am set free by his redemption. Martin Luther, “*Fourteen Consolations*” (1520) LW 42, 163-64.