

We have seen the Lord! – April 24, 2022

“I have seen the Lord!” Mary runs from her conversation with the risen Jesus, aka “the gardener” to share the wonderful news with the disciples. “I have seen the Lord!” and then she spills out the details of what she saw, what he said to her, and what Jesus told her to tell the others. John doesn’t say much about the disciples’ reaction, but Luke does.

From Luke 24:1-12

But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ³ So they went in, but they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? ⁶ He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.”

*⁸ Then they remembered that Jesus had said this. ⁹ So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. ¹¹ **But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn’t believe it.** ¹² However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.*

But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they did not believe it.

Fast forward about 12 hours to Sunday evening. From John 20:19-25...

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵ They told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But Thomas 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.”

I think Thomas gets a bad rap. Definitely not in the same category with Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Or with Peter who denied even knowing

Jesus three times on the eve of his crucifixion. But, throughout history Thomas has been known as Doubting Thomas because he needed to see with his own eyes in order to believe when the other disciples proclaimed, “We have seen the Lord!” Maybe Thomas felt guilt or regret that he wasn’t there when the disciples said Jesus came to them. Or maybe he thought they were playing some cruel joke on him, but who would do such a thing in the middle of a grief they all were experiencing?

What makes the whole situation that much harder is that it is another whole week before Jesus appears to the disciples again – this time with Thomas present. I can imagine the joy, the relief that the others experience throughout the days and the nights. But day after day, Thomas has his nose rubbed in the Jesus experience. “We have seen the Lord! C’mon, Thomas, why won’t you believe us?”

Let’s pick up with verse 26...

26 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. “Peace be with you,” he said. 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”

28 “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed.

29 Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”

Thomas is present with the others when Jesus next appears to the disciples. But note, Jesus doesn’t say to Thomas, “You should never have doubted.” Instead, he offers up the evidence to Thomas, which, by the way, we have no evidence that Thomas actually touched the wounds as he said he would need to do. And then Jesus tells him, “Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”

What comes next is one of the greatest confessions of faith in history. Thomas exclaims, “My Lord and my God!”

For some reason, we let ourselves think of doubt as only a bad thing. “Real Christians don’t doubt,” we might say. But that just isn’t true. Doubt isn’t the opposite of faith; in many cases doubt is the forerunner of faith. Doubt doesn’t cancel faith; it often gives way to faith. And in some cases, as with Thomas, doubt can be the driving force that leads to the truth.

Have you read Lee Strobel’s book, *The Case for Christ*? Strobel was an atheist, a journalist, and an attorney. He devoted a chunk of his life to challenging experts with point-blank questions about the possibility and the veracity of claims made about Jesus – as one theologian writes: “Lee Strobel probes with bulldog-like tenacity the evidence for the truth of biblical Christianity.” Strobel’s doubt leads him on a quest for answers he

is convinced will prove his doubts are confirmed. But in the end, doubt leads to questions which lead to answers which lead to convictions of faith in Jesus Christ which lead Strobel to be an advocate for a deep belief and faith in Jesus Christ.

The Thomas myth -- that real Christians don't doubt -- doesn't come from the Bible. The lessons to be learned from Thomas's experience are that doubt is natural, that you can be honest about your doubts, and that honest doubt should give way to faith when Jesus reveals the truth to you. Jesus doesn't want you to hide your doubts from him. He loves you. He welcomes your questions in order that your faith, your belief, your discipleship might be strengthened, nurtured, and grown.

We have seen the Lord! Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed!

Sermon Guide – April 24, 2022

Read the accounts of Jesus Resurrection from the Gospels. What similarities do you find? What differences do you see?

Matthew 28

Mark 16

Luke 24

John 20

Back to Thomas in John 20... How do you feel about Thomas and the “doubting” moniker?

When have you questioned or doubted? What has been the result of those doubts?