

Easter Sunday

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 April 2018

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Hinson

[0 : 00] Incredibly blessed this week to have an amazing Maundy Thursday service with Church of the Resurrection. We had a Good Friday service here where we reflected on the meaning of the cross.

Last night some of us were out until the early hours of the morning celebrating the Easter Vigil, a great tradition in the church and in our church. And it all culminates here, the celebration at Easter Sunday, the high point of the Christian year.

And so what a blessing to be together. I want to take a few minutes now as we open the Word to look at a man named Thomas. Frankly, I think Thomas has gotten a bad rap.

I think history has been very unfair to Thomas. And maybe this is because I'm named after him, but I'm sympathetic to Thomas.

Of all that Thomas was and all that Thomas did, history has immortalized him as the doubting Thomas, which is always said with a kind of negative connotation. And I think that's unfair for a lot of reasons.

[1 : 04] I think it's unfair because, in fact, what we'll see in this passage is Thomas comes to faith in the resurrection. And then he makes one of the most powerful declarations of faith in Jesus that we have anywhere recorded in Scripture, when he calls Jesus, my Lord and my God.

It's a clear recognition of Jesus' lordship and his divinity. It comes from Thomas. And then church history and tradition tells us that after this, Thomas became one of the church's first missionaries.

And that he took the gospel all the way down into the subcontinent of India, where he was eventually martyred. So I'm not sure that it's fair to just call him a doubting Thomas.

You know, I'm kind of sympathetic. Maybe it's the name thing, or maybe it's the fact that I've also always struggled with doubt. And so what I want to do now is to vindicate Thomas.

And I want to do that by vindicating doubt. Because I think, like Thomas, doubt has gotten a bad rap in church history. And so hopefully we're going to change that by looking at John chapter 20, verses 19 to 31.

[2 : 16] We're going to see three things about doubt. Doubt is inevitable. It's unavoidable. It's inevitable. Two, doubt can be valuable. And then three, knowing those two things, how do we deal with doubt?

What role can it play in the life of a believing person? Those are our points. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. But honestly, Lord, apart from your resurrection, your word would be nothing.

That we don't believe in your resurrection because of your word. We believe in your word because of the resurrection. Our entire faith hinges on this great truth.

And so as we open your word, we pray that because you are living, Lord, because you are alive and because you are present, that you would illuminate your word through your Holy Spirit and enable us to see you for who you really are in the flesh, our Lord and our God, Jesus Christ.

And it's in your name that we pray. Amen. So let's get into the story. The first thing I want to consider is the fact that doubt is inevitable. If you were following along a moment ago when we read the gospel, the disciples are assembled together and the door is shut and locked.

[3 : 33] And this is after the resurrection. And to their great surprise and awe, the resurrected Jesus appears in their midst. And he shows them his hands and he shows them his side.

And he then blesses them and pronounces peace to them. And then he breathes on them and fills them with the Holy Spirit.

And then he says, as the Father sent me, so I am sending you. He is commissioning them to go from being disciples to being apostles, which literally means the sent ones.

I'm sending you out now to be my witnesses. I'm giving you authority to lead and to oversee the church in my name. This is what's happening. But one person is conspicuously absent.

Thomas is not there. We don't know why. We can read into it, but it would be all speculation. And so the disciples all come to Thomas and they say, I can't believe you weren't there.

[4 : 30] Jesus appeared. We have seen the Lord. And what does Thomas very famously say? Well, lest I see the wounds, lest I touch them, lest I put my hand into his side, I will never believe.

So then eight days later, the disciples are together again. The door is locked again. And nevertheless, Jesus appears in their midst. And immediately, Jesus turns to Thomas and says, Here, touch my wounds.

Put your hand in my side. And then he says to Thomas those very famous words, Do not disbelieve, but believe. Do not disbelieve, but believe.

Now, I want to be clear on the wording. The reason is this. Often we read this and we read it in our minds as Jesus saying, Don't doubt, but believe.

Don't have doubt, but believe. And I think that we read it that way because maybe some of us grew up in families or churches where that was the message when it came to doubt. Or maybe we grew up in families and churches because we've misread the text.

[5 : 34] I'm not sure which is the chicken and which is the egg. But in any case, I know that some of us grew up in a believing culture where doubt was a negative. If you doubt, it is evidence that you are of weak faith or of weak character or of weak commitment.

And if you asked questions, that was seen as a negative. And you were expected to believe what you were taught and don't ask questions. No questions allowed. Believe it. Accept it. Doubt is a negative thing.

Doubt is a negative thing. And so it's easy to read this passage with that kind of lens on. But I want to be clear on this. That is not what Jesus is saying. How do we know? Well, there are four words in Koine Greek that can all be translated as doubt in the New Testament.

You know which word shows up here? Not a single one of those words. The word that is actually used by Jesus is a word that means an active rejection of the faith.

It's being unfaithful. So what Jesus is actually literally saying is to Thomas, he's saying, don't become unfaithful. Become faithful.

[6 : 42] So Thomas is in a state of indecision. The jury is still out. And Jesus is making an appeal to him. Don't decide to reject this. Decide to accept it.

Make that choice. Now, why is that important? Well, when it concerns the topic of doubt, it's very important. Because here's the reality of doubt. Whether I choose to believe in something like the resurrection, or I choose not to believe in something like the resurrection, regardless of what choice I make, doubt will be a part of that choice.

Because doubt is always there. When you're dealing with something like the existence of God, or the resurrection of Jesus, that is not empirically verifiable, ultimately you're making a decision that is a faith choice.

You can't prove it. And so it takes an equal amount of faith to say it didn't happen, as it does to say it did happen. But both are going to be laced with doubt.

And this is a very important thing for us to understand, that those people in life who are believers, who have chosen to put their faith in Jesus Christ, will always be haunted by doubt. Because frankly, we live in a culture that undermines faith.

[8 : 01] Right? It undermines belief. We live in a very materialistic culture, where a lot of people just take for granted, they say there's no such thing as the supernatural, no such thing as God, no such thing as resurrection, miracles don't happen.

And so faith, belief is constantly undermined. But here's the thing that we don't often think about. And maybe some of you are here, and you wouldn't consider yourself to be a believer, and you can see whether or not this is true of you.

But just as believers are haunted by doubt, maybe this isn't true, unbelievers are also haunted by doubt. Maybe this is true. Maybe it is true.

Maybe, just maybe, just maybe, there is a God. Maybe, just maybe, I was created for a purpose. Maybe, just maybe, there's a being out there who loves me.

And that possibility is terrifying to some people. Maybe I've rejected a God who actually desires a relationship with me, who actually has an opinion about the choices that I make.

[9 : 01] Right, I love the quote from Thomas Nagel, who's an atheist philosopher at NYU, who writes about being haunted by belief. He says, I want atheism to be true.

And it made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. Right, she says, I want, I want there to be no God, but then I look around and these are these people that I respect, who are thoughtful and well-read, and they believe.

And what if it's true? Right, so either way you go, doubt is going to be a part of it. Choose to believe, choose not to believe, you're going to doubt either way. Which leads to the second point.

Doubt is not only inevitable, but doubt can be very, very valuable. Very valuable. Now before we talk about how doubt can be valuable, we need to differentiate, because there are different kinds of doubt.

Right? Different kinds of doubt. For instance, we live in a culture, the prevailing culture in D.C. would consider cynicism to be a kind of fashionable characteristic.

[10 : 08] You know, if you are a cynic, if you're the kind of person who always sees through things, you're always punching holes in things, you're always deconstructing things, you're never believing anything, you're always questioning everything, that is seen as a form of intellectual sophistication.

But in many cases, it's a shortcut to the appearance of intellectual sophistication, because it's not necessarily based on an enormous amount of thought, reading, research, things like that.

We do it because we want other people to think that we're intelligent and not naive. And so in our culture, it is very prized to come across as cynical. So you see, it's interesting.

Some people live in religious communities where doubt, any shred of doubt, is seen as a bad thing. Other people live in very cynical communities where anything but doubt is seen as a very negative thing.

Right? But that isn't true doubt. That's just trying to appear intellectually sophisticated. You know, doubt makes me seem intelligent. There's also a kind of doubt that is not very valuable, where doubt is used as a form of moral license.

[11 : 12] The atheist Aldous Huxley, in his book, *Ends and Means*, famously says this. He says, I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning and consequently assumed that it had none.

For myself, as no doubt for most of my friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality.

Now, do you understand what he's saying? He's being profoundly honest in a way that probably most of us would not be. He's saying, as long as I don't believe anything, I don't have to be accountable to anything.

You know, as long as I believe that the world and life and all of this is meaningless, I can do what I want and I don't ever have to justify, explain, or give an account for my choices. And so, it's doubt as a means to the end of total moral license, living an unaccountable life.

And I would strongly suggest that's not a very helpful form of doubt. It's not really an honest form of doubt. And then what I want to suggest is that Thomas is actually showing us a very different kind of doubt, a very valuable kind of doubt.

[12 : 19] Can you think of the other references that we have in Scripture to Thomas? There's only a couple. We don't know much. You know, you kind of try to build a kind of profile of somebody biblically, and you just kind of pull, you have to pull in whatever you can from what we know.

We don't have a lot on Thomas, so most of it is speculation. There's only two other references to anything that Thomas says. You know what one of them is, though?

It's earlier in John's Gospel. Jesus is talking about the fact that he is going to go to Jerusalem and will likely die there. And Thomas is the one who speaks up and says, well, I'm going to go with you.

And even if that means that I die, I'm going. So what you see in Thomas is this, he's not this aloof, distant, skeptic, kind of jury still out on what does he think about Jesus.

Thomas is a man who said, if you're going to Jerusalem and if you're going to die, then I'm going to be right there with you, even if it means that I die. And what we see in Thomas is this man who's profoundly devoted to Jesus, willing to put his life on the line to continue to follow Jesus, regardless of what it means.

[13 : 27] So if that is true of Thomas, then how do you imagine the cross impacted him? Right? All of the hopes and the dreams that they had penned on Jesus.

All of the hopes that Jesus would finally be the king to liberate the Israelites from the Jews from Roman occupation. You know, that Jesus would bring the kingdom of God and it would be a new way of life and he would make their nation great again.

All of the hopes that they had. And then all of that dashed in an instant. One minute they're sitting there sharing a Passover meal together. The next minute Jesus is being arrested and dragged away and tortured and executed.

Can you imagine the disillusionment that set in? Can you imagine how crushing that would have been? So now how do we understand Thomas' doubt?

God. He says, I don't think I can take that again. You know, I got my hopes. My hopes were so high.

[14 : 33] My hopes were up here. And then seeing him executed on the cross, that nearly killed me. I think that's why he wasn't there the first time. I think Thomas just, you know, and this is just my speculation, I imagine that after that, Thomas just probably said, I need some time alone.

I don't know if I can keep doing this. And so when they come and they say, we've seen the Lord, he's risen. Thomas says, don't do that to me. I cannot take this. I can't allow myself to be hopeful only to be crushed again.

I don't think I'll survive it. Now I know we're just speculating here, but I think that that's what's going on in Thomas. And so in a nutshell, I think Thomas' doubt is this kind of doubt.

It's the kind of doubt that says, I don't want to be gullible. I don't want to be taken for a fool. I don't want to believe something just because I want to believe it, because it would be nice to believe it, but something that has no foundation to it.

And you know what I say to that? I say, good for Thomas. Good for Thomas. Because guess what? There are far too many gullible Christians in the world. There are.

[15 : 40] Every time somebody sees a face of Jesus and a piece of toast, Christians freak out. You know? And that's not a good kind of faith. That's not a good, I mean, hopefully I don't have to tell you that.

But that's not the kind of faith we're called to have. Right? And Thomas is saying, I don't want to be taken, I was taken for a fool once, I'm not going to let that happen again. So this is really, really, really good.

It's very valuable. And I would go so far as to say, doubt is not only valuable, it is essential for people who want to grow in their faith.

That doubt is essential. There is a, there's a man, he passed away a few years ago, but his name is Dr. James Fowler, and he was at Emory University, and he studies an interesting field.

He studies theology and human development. And so if any teachers in the room or anybody familiar with developmental theories, like, you know, Erickson or Kohlberg or Piaget, these sort of developmental stage theories of moral and cognitive development.

[16 : 41] Well, Fowler came along and he said, I want to develop a stage theory of faith, of the developmental stages of faith. And I don't agree with everything Fowler says about faith, certainly not, but there's one point that he makes in his theory that I think is extremely important for us to meditate on.

He says that most people, you know, kids in the room are kind of on track for this, that if you grow up in a believing home, that most people by the time they reach early to middle adolescence are in what he calls stage three faith.

And stage three faith is the kind of faith where you look around and your parents believe it, your friends believe it, your friends' families believe it, your church community believes it, the people at your school believe it, whatever it is, but the community around you shares the same faith.

And so as a kid, even as an adolescent, you say, well, if they believe it, it must be true. And so I'm going to believe it too. And it's also a way to belong in a community. This is how to belong. I believe, right?

And Fowler says that many people, many people can, they get to that stage and that's where they stay. And they stay all the way up into adulthood and all the way into old age. They stay in stage three faith.

[17 : 52] Well, the people around me believe it, so I'm going to believe it too. And here's the thing that's interesting. He says, the next stage, stage four, is a stage that is marked by tremendous angst and doubt.

Normally, this happens to people, if you're tracking it chronologically, around age 20, 25, 30, 35, the age of a lot of people in this room. Normally, you know, you sort of have a stage three faith and then you go to university and you have your religion 101 professor whose personal mission is to kind of, you know, deconstruct the faith of anybody who actually believes anything in the room.

And they start punching holes in your faith and you start looking around and you start getting extremely uncomfortable and disoriented and wondering, well, if that's not true, is this true? Is anything true? What do I believe?

And you go into a tailspin. And you say, well, I grew up with this faith, but I've never really chosen this faith. I never really, I don't know if I believe this. Do I just believe this because my mom and dad believe it or do I believe it because I believe it?

That's stage four. And it freaks people out because it's tremendously destabilizing. Who am I if I don't believe this, right? But here's the thing, here's the thing that I think we need to, we need to chew on.

[19 : 06] He says, for people who stay there, in other words, people who are willing to lean into their doubt, to ask the hard questions, to do the investigative work, to read, to think, to talk to other people who believe, to ask what they think, for people who are willing to really lean into and embrace that.

People who come through it reach what Fowler would call stage five faith. And that's people who believe not just because the people around them believe, they believe because they believe. Because somewhere in that wrestling, they met God face to face.

and it transformed their understanding of their faith and it became internal. And it became the kind of faith that regardless of the plausibility structures within which they live, regardless of the people or the belief structures around them, they believe.

And they have a much deeper capacity, Fowler says, for uncertainty and for paradox and for mystery. But here's the point.

If you don't embrace and lean into and push into doubt, in other words, if you're afraid of it, if you run from it, Fowler's point is you will be stunted in your faith.

[20 : 21] If you're always running from doubt, you're not willing to ask the hard questions, Fowler would say, you're not going to grow. And I think that's the point that we need to think about. You know, in my own life, I think about coming to faith and I think about my experience and I would say that doubt was something that I sort of struggled with and continue to struggle with again and again and again.

And there's a part of you that wants to run from it. But this would say, no, lean into it. And I think this is what we, this is part of what we're meant to see in this interaction between Jesus and Thomas.

That's why it's here. Right? So doubt is, is not only valuable, it's essential for growth in our faith to come to a deeper place of faith in Christ. So that's the second point.

Now, so now, if we're sort of thinking about what we've said so far, if doubt is inevitable and if like Thomas, doubt can actually be valuable for us, I don't want to be gullible.

I want to believe something that has legs, that has foundation to it. Then how, what does that look like? How do we use doubt? How do we deal with doubt in our lives? And I'll make three quick suggestions from the text.

[21 : 28] The first thing I want, I want us to see is this. Look at the tremendous grace that Jesus has for doubters. The tremendous grace that, that Jesus shows to doubters.

When the other disciples tell Thomas that they have seen Jesus, he says, well, unless I see the wounds and touch the wounds for myself, I will never believe. And what we need to understand is at that point, Jesus is not there.

He's not there. But then eight days later when Jesus appears, what's the first thing he does? He appears, says, peace be with you. And then he immediately turns to Thomas and essentially he says, hey, you know that thing you said about seeing and touching my wounds?

Here you go. Now what does that tell us? Well, a couple of things. Number one, it tells us that even though Jesus wasn't in the room physically, when Thomas said what he did, he was listening.

He heard him. And the second thing it tells us is look at how Jesus responds to that. You know, Thomas says, unless I see it, unless he proves it, I'll never believe.

[22 : 39] And Jesus doesn't appear and say, how dare you? All the things that I did for you, all the things that I put up with, how dare you doubt that I rose? That's not what Jesus does at all. Jesus says, okay, this is what you asked for.

Here you go. Here, touch me. Look, see. I think this shows tremendous grace. You know, I think it's easy for us to think that God is kind of sitting there saying, yeah, that's not enough faith.

I don't like that doubt. Can you, you know, get your attitude together? Your motives aren't quite right. Can you ask that question again but mean it more? You know, I think that we can think of God as being like that. But would God really do all that he has done all through history bring us all the way to this point only to say, hmm, I don't like your attitude.

No, God is such a tremendous God of grace that any opening, any opening, God seizes on it. And in fact, where does the opening come from?

It comes from the fact that God is already at work in us, in rebellious hearts, which is the most amazing thing about God. You know, I experienced this in my own life. You know, some of you know my story.

[23 : 46] I was baptized at age 12 largely because my dad wanted me to be baptized and so I just kind of said what I needed to say to get baptized. But very soon after that, walked away from the faith. By the time I got to college, was calling myself an agnostic, really didn't meaningfully consider Christianity to be of any importance to me.

I thought when I left home to go to college that I also left that behind. And so years later, I started meeting, at the end of my time in college, I started meeting with a guy and we started reading the Gospel of John together.

But my motive for meeting with this Christian to read John was to disprove his faith. My goal was to show him here's why this is ridiculous and here's how it doesn't hold water.

And I had this, you know, I was profoundly ignorant and profoundly arrogant, which is a very dangerous, lethal combination. And I sort of had mastered ignorance and arrogance and was bringing them both fully to bear in these meetings with this guy.

And yet my experience was that God, I had the worst motives. I had the worst motives. And yet God still met me in those times.

[24 : 56] I still gradually experienced God softening and then ultimately opening my heart to the truth of his son in a way that I did not expect.

I was disarmed, frankly. And that's what it's like to deal with the God of grace as a doubter. You know, you can have the worst motives and God says, I can use that.

I can use that. And he does. Right? So the tremendous grace that God has for doubters. The second thing I want to see is the eyewitness testimonies.

The disciples come to Thomas and they say, we've seen the Lord. And they're essentially saying to Thomas, we are eyewitnesses of the resurrection. We've seen the risen Jesus.

And the thing that we need to understand is that the primary reason that the Gospels were written, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and then Acts, which is like Luke part two, the primary reason that these books were written was to offer careful eyewitness testimony of all things concerning Jesus and his disciples turned apostles so that we might come to faith.

[26 : 08] And this is actually what John says in the end of this passage. He says, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

And by the way, this is why we have so many specific and frankly, wholly unnecessary details. You know, they bring in a huge load of fish and it's not like a myth that says, you know, and there were many fish.

It says there were 153 fish. You know, and people over the years have just gone nuts with trying to make meaning out of that. You know, what's the symbol of 153?

You know, what does that mean? There's some, is that a, you know, it doesn't mean anything. What it means is there were 153 fish. That's what it means. That's the deep meaning, you know. And it says, well, you know, the disciple drew his sword and cut off the servant's ear.

Parentheses, the servant's name was Malchus. Malchus, is that symbolic? Is there a deep spiritual metaphor there? No. His name was Malchus. And what it's saying is, if you want to hear more about this, go into Jerusalem and ask about the servant named Malchus who works with the temple guard and he'll tell you.

[27 : 25] Right? These are meant to be like footnotes. You know, if you want to look more into this story, his name was Cleopas. His name was Malchus. Go ask him. And, you know, 30, 40 years ago, you know, you ask people and they would say, oh, well, the scholarship clearly shows that the gospel accounts were all written centuries after all of this happened.

you know, Jesus died and then in the centuries that followed, all of these myths and legends were raised up about Jesus and they got written down and, you know, the Christians did this in order to justify their movement and to gain power and influence and all of this stuff.

Well, since that time, the most recent body of work and, you know, there's a very sizable body of scholarship now that says, actually, no, we actually have a lot of evidence to suggest that the gospels were written within the lifetime, within the first century and within the lifetime of the people who are in these accounts and that the reason that we have all of these specific details is because these are being, these accounts are being written by people who know that they're writing about people who are still alive, that they're not written in the form of myth, that they're not written in the form of legend, that they're written in very specific ways by people who, it's obvious, are wanting their audience to do their homework.

And so, when we have this body, this eyewitness testimony, you know, we can sort of look at this and say, well, you know, well, this is nice, but I kind of wish that Jesus would do what he did to Thomas.

I kind of wish that, you know, I could have this and that Jesus would appear and I could see the wounds and then I could have both, you know. And I think what we need to understand is what we said at the beginning, Jesus appears to his disciples for a specific reason.

[29 : 15] He's commissioning them to be apostles. He breathes on them, gives them the Holy Spirit, says, I'm giving you authority, I'm going to send you as I was once sent. This is the language of apostleship.

And his intention is that Thomas be an apostle, which he became an apostle. The primary criteria for an apostle, you have to have seen Jesus with your own eyes. That's what makes you an apostle.

You have to have seen Jesus. And so he wants Thomas to be an apostle and so he appears to him. But then Jesus and then John, they make it very clear. Jesus says, oh, you believe because you've seen me?

Well, blessed are those who believe and yet have not seen. And then John goes on to say, yeah, that's why I wrote this book. That God's intention is that faith be transmitted through eyewitnesses from one generation to the next, to the next, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And so I would encourage those of you for whom doubt is a real issue, read the eyewitness accounts, read the carefully recorded details, begin to look into and investigate the research surrounding the authorship of the Gospels and why they are reliable and trustworthy, that they're intended to do exactly what Jesus is saying, to enable people like us to believe even if we haven't seen.

[30 : 31] So we have the eyewitness testimonies. And then lastly, thirdly, Jesus has tremendous grace for doubters. We have the eyewitness testimonies. And then third thing that gives hope to doubters, look at the wounds.

Look at the wounds. You know, big question, why if you're Jesus and you go through this horrible torture and death and then you're raised in your perfected, glorified, eternal body that will never fade or perish, why still have the wounds?

You know, if you're Jesus, do you want to constantly be reminded of that awful day? You know, why have the wounds? What's the point of the wounds in the resurrected Jesus? Well, I think if the eyewitness testimonies offer head evidence, the wounds are meant to offer heart evidence.

They're meant to offer heart evidence. I think Jesus doesn't just want to convince Thomas that the resurrection happened. I think he wants to convince Thomas what it means.

What does the resurrection actually mean? What does it tell us about God? And see, Christian faith isn't just about believing in this abstract idea of resurrection. Well, I think it's scientifically possible.

[31 : 48] It's about believing that there is a God out there who made us, who loves us so tremendously much that he was willing to die in order to make relationship with us possible.

It's meant to convince us of the love of God as expressed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The wounds are meant to convince us of God's love.

Right? There are so many different religions out there, so many different religions that teach basically the same thing, but there's only one religion out there that says, God loves you so much that he was willing to suffer and die for you.

Right? On Good Friday, I read a poem and I'm going to read one stanza from that poem, but it was a poem from a guy named Edward Shalito who wrote a poem called Jesus of the Scars and he was a free church minister.

He survived the horrors and atrocities of World War I in England and then coming out of that in 1919, he wrote this poem and I'll just read the last stanza. The other gods were strong, but you were weak.

[32 : 57] They rode, but you did stumble to a throne. But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak and not a god has wounds, but you alone.

So I think this is the meaning of the wounds. They're meant to convince us that God loves us, that he shares in our suffering and that he did everything necessary to ensure that one day we would never suffer again.

So if you're a doubter and you're in this room, you're in good company. First of all, we have a lot in common. I've always been a tooth and nail Christian myself and there's good news in here for doubters.

We can follow the example of Thomas. Look at the tremendous grace that God shows to doubters. Look at the eyewitness testimonies. God means us to engage with our full intellect in our faith and then finally look at the wounds in the resurrected body of Jesus and see the love of God on display.

And here's why all of this matters, my final point. If the resurrection did not happen, you know what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, our faith is in vain.

[34 : 15] It's meaningless. And he says, we above all others should be pitied. So, as your pastor, I will tell you this. If the resurrection didn't happen, go choose another religion because Christianity is far too inconvenient.

It asks far too much of us. If the resurrection didn't happen, it is not worth, it is not worth it. But, if like Thomas and me and many people in this room, if you believe that it did happen, if the resurrection is true, then Jesus is worth everything.

Then we should be willing to give him everything. The one option that is not left open to us is to see him as a benign advice giver, a happy, nice, good example to follow.

It has to be all or none. That's how central the resurrection is. And so, if the resurrection is true, I encourage you and I invite you to exclaim as the doubting Thomas once did, my Lord and my God.

Let's pray.