

# Thomas and the resurrection

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[ 0 : 00 ] There. I'm going to use the screen. And before we think about this, we'll pray.

! Death and resurrection. And as we think about it now, please be our helper, so that we may see and believe in a real sense this evening.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I'm going to get straight into the text of what it says.

So, this morning we looked at resurrection in John's Gospel. And if you've got your Bible there, you can see that in the first part of chapter 20, different people go and visit the tomb.

And with varying degrees of understanding, the tomb's empty, apart from folded grave clothes and angels. And like, I think, you or I would, they found it very difficult to take in.

[ 1 : 22 ] There's no sense in the story here that they said, oh, yes, of course. They found it difficult and it took them time to take it in. And here, as we've just been reading, there's somebody else who's like us who says, I'm not going to believe that just because you tell me, you know, fairy stories.

I want some real evidence. And so, we've got that as well this evening. So, we'll be looking at that. So, in the first part of the chapter, we see people moving towards faith.

And this second part of the chapter is what happens the same night, verse 19, on the evening of that first day of the week. And also, what happens a week later, which is there in verse 26, a week later, his disciples were in the house again.

That's what we're going to look at. And previously, Mary had said to the disciples, in verse 18, I've seen the Lord. So, this remarkable testimony from Mary.

And we also saw Simon Peter and John, who, at least John, maybe Simon Peter as well, believed. But, this is now I'm looking at verse 9, he saw and believed, but they still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

[ 2 : 50 ] So, there was some sort of necessity, some sort of strong connection with the Bible that they hadn't yet understood and they were working on.

And I was saying this morning that we, too, make a journey of faith. And there are things that we try and connect and we don't always get the connection straight away.

And if you're on that sort of journey, I wanted to encourage you, these people made that journey and they got there in the end. And maybe, well, maybe, hopefully, if you're on that journey, you will get to faith in the end as well.

So, I'd like to look this evening at four matters raised by Jesus in the text that we have, in the story that we have. And the first one is that fear is turned to peace.

So, if you look at what it says in verse 19, the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. And a week later, the doors are still locked as well.

[ 3 : 55 ] Verse 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. So, I think the first thing that I'm noticing there is this fear.

They didn't want to put themselves out in public. They didn't want to risk anything. They were prepared to be in a little huddle and lock the doors.

But that was about as far as it went. That's very different from what happened later, isn't it? Very different. Later on, we find them going out, being quite assertive about their faith, wanting to tell people.

And there's no sense of doors being locked. Now, it doesn't, well, it does refer a bit to that. But the immediate connection is that Jesus says, peace.

Do you notice the doors were locked? Jesus came and stood among them and says, it's a present tense, peace be with you. So, as it's recorded here, the response to their fear is to say, I bring you peace.

[ 5 : 13 ] And interestingly, in verse 21, you have exactly the same thing repeated. And Jesus said, peace be with you. Now, some of us repeat things when we can't think of anything else sensible to say.

But quite often, people repeat things because they mean it. So, Jesus has twice said, peace be with you. And I think that is put out of doubt because if you look in verse 26, what happens a week later, although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them.

And he says exactly the same thing again. So, I think he's making a point. I'm bringing you in place of your fear, peace.

And my only comment is to refer us to John 14, where, so this is a few pages earlier, if you might like to look at it.

John chapter 14. John chapter 14 is in the middle of quite a long section of teaching that Jesus gives.

[ 6 : 19 ] When the cross, when his death is very, very close, when he's with his disciples and they're eating probably the last supper together. And in John 14, verse 27, he says, peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.

Interesting, he says, my peace, the same peace that I experience, the same peace that I value, the same peace that keeps me going. I'm going to leave with you.

I'm going to leave with you. And he says it's quite different to anything that you get without Jesus. It's not the same as doing yoga. It's not the same as doing meditation.

It's not the same as having chamomile tea. He says, I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

And I'm going to let that stand without much further comment. But isn't that an important thing? That Jesus, the risen Jesus says, I bring peace.

[ 7 : 30 ] Perhaps it's something we don't very often think about. It's not to do with being busy. It's not to do with being active. It's not to do with those sorts of things.

It's something that Jesus gives to us. Something that comes from him. And he says it's important. My peace I give you. Peace be with you.

Peace with God. Peace with one another. Peace with ourselves. Peace about the way God is dealing with us. Isn't that a valuable thing? To have peace.

Peace. And that's exactly what the risen Jesus gives. Fear. Anxiety. Trouble. Turn to peace. And he mentions it three times.

So I think I'm justified in saying there's something worth pondering. And my application point is that might be something worth praying about. We live in a world full of trouble.

[ 8 : 31 ] And we have all sorts of troubles whizzing around in our minds. Some of them justified. Some of them probably not worth worrying about at all. But Jesus says, well, whatever it is, do not let your heart be troubled.

Don't be anxious. Peace. Because one thing I can give you is peace. Peace. The risen Jesus who's conquered and reigns and has everything in his hands says, I've got peace.

So I think I make that as the first point. And I think that's a point worth making and worth remembering. My second point, I've got four points. This one's a little bit longer.

Is that he does sending. So the first thing was about peace. And the second thing is about sending. So I'm now looking at, I'm going to go to verse 21.

But let's read what it says in between. Verse 20. After he had said this, he showed them his hands and sighed. The disciples rejoiced. His eyes were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

[ 9 : 32 ] Well, as we were thinking this morning, it is a wonderful thing. It's difficult to get your head round. But once you have got your head round it, a tremendous thing. Somebody you thought was dead and gone. Somebody you had such hopes in.

Which apparently have all been disappointed. And then he comes back to life. And no wonder the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Verse 21. Jesus again said, peace be with you. Now notice this bit. 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 his sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. What's he talking about?

What's going on here? It's to do with sending, isn't it? As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And Jesus is making a comparison with what the Father has done with him to what he is doing with

his disciples.

[10:45] And he's talking to those specific disciples there all those years ago. The first generation disciples. And he's sending them. He doesn't say with the gospel. That's to say the Christian message.

But I think that's very clearly what's implied. He's sending them on a mission. And as the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends the disciples.

It's like what he said in John 17, 20. Where he said, my prayer is not for my disciples alone. I pray for those who will believe in me through their message.

And he's thinking of the disciples. These first generation people who are seeing and eyewitnesses. Hearing exactly what Jesus said. He says, the Father sent me.

And then you guys, I'm sending you. But not only does he send them in that sense. But he sends them with the Holy Spirit.

[11:48] And we could say that in a sense the Son also sends the Spirit. Excuse me. I'm looking at verse 22 where it says, and with that he breathed on them.

And it said, receive the Holy Spirit. Now I'm going to say that this is quite compact. There's lots of explanation that you could and probably need to fill in.

But what Jesus says is very, very compacted. He just breaks it, boils it down to the barest minimum. So what we're talking about is mission. Mission meaning a purpose where there is a movement to people from God.

And it's a movement to people to bless them. To tell them something. To open their eyes. To change their lives. To do all those sorts of things.

And this movement started with the Father sending the Son. So that's a mission, isn't it? The Son is sent on a mission. And it continues with the Son sending his disciples.

[13:03] So he sends them on a mission. And along with that sending is the giving of the Spirit. So the Spirit too is part of this mission. It's an interesting picture, isn't it? Of a missionary God.

A God who doesn't just wait for people to come to him. But who goes out of his way and makes a deliberate initiative to go out to people. And that's exactly what Jesus is involved with here.

The Holy Spirit part of it. He breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit. Well breathing. I don't know whether you know that the Greek word for breath.

Nevma. Is the same as the Greek word for spirit. Which is Nevma. From which we get pneumatic. As in pneumatic tires. And we turn the words into English.

Turn the letters into English. So he's breathing on them. And saying receive the Holy Spirit. I am able to give the Holy Spirit to you.

[14:05] Now I would say this is done proleptically. You're glad I said that because I didn't know what it meant either.

It means ahead of time. So it's something you do now in advance of the real thing later. And we know from the Bible on the day of Pentecost.

They had to actually wait. And then the reality of receiving the Holy Spirit. Remember the day of Pentecost. Great big event. When the spirit came down like wind and flames of fire.

And then when that point was reached. Definitely the disciples came out of their locked rooms. And started to speak about Jesus Christ.

And that I would say is what Jesus is referring to here. Referring to sending and mission. Shall I sharpen that up? I didn't realize how blurred it was. And what is the mission to do with?

[15:12] Well this is very compactly stated in verse 23. If you forgive anyone his sins they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them they are not forgiven. Now let me tell you what I don't think he's saying.

I don't think he's saying that human beings have the power to forgive sins. I don't think he's talking about priests.

Because some churches have priests who apparently can forgive sins. And I don't think he's talking about that. And the reason I say that is because Jesus himself says.

That the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. And you remember his critics says. Well only God can do that. That isn't something that human beings have in their hands. You know like writing checks.

Or something like that. And I think that's right. Human beings don't have that power. Any more than human beings have the power to give the Holy Spirit to people. This is something divine.

[16:16] It's Jesus who gives the Holy Spirit. And it's Jesus from whom forgiveness comes. However there is a method that Jesus uses to give forgiveness. And the method is the gospel.

Is this good news that people. That God goes out of his way to bring to people. And that people are invited to receive and believe. And he says that this is what's at stake is forgiveness of sins.

And I think the point he's making is. That it is an effective means. And it is the sole means. So if you forgive anyone his sins. They're forgiven. I think what he's saying is.

If you speak to somebody. You explain the good news of Jesus Christ. You explain the cross. You explain the resurrection. You explain it. Because you know about it. I've taught it to you guys. You go and tell them.

If they believe that. They are forgiven. It is effective. So there's something gloriously certain. Be certain. About the Christian message.

[17:19] It isn't saying. If you believe in Jesus Christ. Well you might be forgiven. You might not. And it isn't saying. If you believe in Jesus Christ. Actually you've got to add to that. Quite a lot of your own effort.

You've actually got to be a good person. And turn over a new leaf. And that sort of thing. And even then. You might not have done enough. It doesn't have that quality to it.

It has an effectiveness. And there's a song. That was written by Charles Wesley. Way back in the 18th century. I think it was him. The vilest offender.

Who truly believes. Was it Wesley? The vilest offender. Who truly believes. That moment from Jesus. A pardon receives. That's very categorical isn't it?

The vilest offender. Who truly believes. That moment from Jesus. A pardon receives. If you forgive anyone his sins.

[18:17] They are forgiven. If somebody accepts your message. The message that comes through you. They are forgiven. It's effective. And it's the sole means of forgiveness. If you do not forgive them.

They are not forgiven. I think that's a very concentrated way of saying. There is no alternative. There is no plan B. It isn't saying. There are other messages.

Which are equally as good. You just choose which one you want. It is not saying. That all religions. More or less lead to the same thing. Jesus doesn't say that sort of stuff.

He says. Actually. If you don't get forgiveness. Through the apostles. Through their message. Then you don't get forgiveness anywhere else.

It's the effective means. And it's the sole means of forgiveness. There is no other message. There is no other saviour. There is no other person who died on the cross.

[19:17] There's no one else who has risen from the dead. It's a very strong claim. But that's the claim Jesus is making. In that statement. And I've unpacked it a little bit.

But I realize you might say. Hmm. But I think that's a fair idea. That idea of what Jesus is saying there. And I think something for us to appreciate. I know a number of us here.

Have been Christians for quite a long time. But isn't that a wonderful message. Not something to get tired of. The. If. We.

Receive this message. We are forgiven. And it's a message that God has gone out of his way. To give to us. And God is continuing to go out of his way. To send.

To give. And so on. Let's look at the. Third thing now. I'm looking at seeing. And. Believing.

[20:13] So seeing. Whether it is or isn't believing. So now we come to verse 24. Now Thomas. Called 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. 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. That's. John 20 verse. Verse.

Verse. Verse. What verse is it? 25. 25. So he's saying. I insist. On. The physical evidence. That's what he's saying.

And you can probably sympathize with him. 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.

[21:12] So you notice that his resurrection body. Had. There were certain things. By which it was not limited. The way that our bodies are. How did he. How did he manage to get there through a locked door?

Well. I don't know. But he did. He says. Peace be with you. And then he says to Thomas. Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand.

Put it into my side. So he's. He's not saying to Thomas. You can't have the physical evidence. He actually says. Here is the physical evidence.

So. Here I am. Here is the risen Lord. With the nail marks. Still in his hands. And where the spear went into his side. Apparently still visible.

And. Thomas says. If you're going to come. Claim resurrection. Which is such a. Bizarre thing to claim. I'm not going to believe that. Unless I've got some very very good evidence.

[ 22 : 11 ] And Jesus says. Absolutely. Here is the very good evidence. There's my hand. There's my side. Check it out. As much as you want. And then he says.

When you've checked it out. You believe it. Notice what he says. Stop doubting. And believe. So. It's interesting that Jesus. Doesn't criticize Thomas.

At least not at this point. He doesn't say. You know. You should have believed this. He says. No. Fair enough. Here's the evidence. But once he's given the evidence.

He says. Now you've got to believe it. Because if you're not going to believe that. That's just being perverse. I've given you the abundant evidence. And there's Thomas. For whom. Seeing is believing.

He sees. Touches. And Jesus says. That's. That's how you have faith. And you. You need to have faith. It's perverse not to. And he says.

[ 23 : 07 ] Verse. Well. Verse 28. Is the high water mark. Of. Faith. In the New Testament.

So it's the very highest level. That it's going to go to. Which is to say to Jesus. Excuse me. My Lord. And my God. So it doesn't get any higher than that.

To say to Jesus. My Lord. And my God. That's faith. The high water mark. Of faith. Now then.

In verse 29. Jesus says to him. Because you have seen me. You have believed. So for him. Seeing was believing. And now Jesus. Refers to the situation.

Of people. Like us. In following generations. Who do not have access. To. The physical body. Of Jesus Christ.

[ 24 : 05 ] Because this. Took place. Over a limited period. The resurrection. Sightings. And hearings.

And touchings. Took place. Over a limited period. And we live outside. That period. We're 2000 years on. And Jesus says. I'm sorry. I'm not going to.

Come to every church meeting. As in the risen Christ. And show you. My hands and side. I'm not going to do that. I've done it once. Done it over. In those.

Years and days. Now I'm in heaven. And that's where. The second part. Of what he says. Comes into play. To Thomas. He says.

Because you have seen me. You have believed. Blessed. Are those who have not seen. And yet have believed. And that's us. We have faith.

[ 25 : 01 ] Or we are. We are to have faith. Without having seen. The risen Christ. And I'll explain. How that such faith. Is possible. In a moment. But do you notice.

That he says. Blessed. Blessed are those. Who have not seen. And yet have believed. So it's not an impossible thing. It's a blessed thing.

But it's not an impossible thing. It's a blessed thing. To believe in Jesus Christ. Even though we have not seen him. It is possible to do so.

And there is a blessing. In doing so. And how might we do so. Well that's what. Jesus comes to. In the next bit. Or that's what the.

The gospel writer. Comes to. Which is in verse 30. Jesus did many other. Miraculous signs. In the presence of his disciples. Which are not. Not recorded. In this book.

[ 25 : 55 ] 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. So let's come and look at that. Because there's more in there. Than you might think. For Thomas.

Seeing was believing. But there's a blessing. In believing. Without seeing. How can anybody. Have faith like that. God. And. Notice. What he says. Then. He goes. In. Into it.

Step by step. Verse 30. Jesus did many. Miraculous signs. In the presence. Of his disciples. Some of them are recorded.

In the book. And some of them aren't. So it starts off. With the signs. That Jesus did. So when Jesus was on earth. Excuse me again. He did stuff.

[ 26 : 50 ] He did things. Which conclusively demonstrate. Who he was. He fed the 5,000. He walked on water. He raised the paralyzed man.

He raised Lazarus. From the dead. And if you. If you. Care to research it. None of his critics say. You didn't do these things. All the critics say.

Well he did them. But he did them for the wrong motive. Or there's something else wrong. They found fault in some other way. Jesus did. Miraculous signs.

And he did them in the presence. Of his disciples. So there were. Eyewitnesses. And ear witnesses. People. Who saw it.

And heard it. There were such people. And they. Wrote them down. Verse 31. These are written.

[ 27 : 48 ] So we've got eye and ear witnesses. Who selectively. Write down. Thank you very much. Thank you. Pop it there. They write down.

They don't write down everything. Because it would. Be huge. If they wrote down everything. But they've written down. Enough. And they've written it down. Well enough. And clearly enough. And sincerely enough. That. That testimony. Is written. So that we might have faith. So in other words.

It's saying. We don't have to go back. Into those days. It is possible for us. Now. With these documents. With this book.

To have faith. And you might say. How does that happen? And I don't think I can explain it. Apart from to say. It does happen. And the way to put it to the test.

[ 28 : 45 ] Is to read the book. And to ask. As you read it. Or maybe get somebody. To read it with you. As we're doing in that. This little.

Would you like the opportunity. To read the Bible. If so. Then. Somebody will. Sit and read the Bible with you. But as you read it.

It has power. To convince us. There's a power. In this word. To say. That's right. And. God. Works. And speaks. And does things. As we read his word. It has its own power. To produce faith. And the faith.

That he's talking about. And there's more to it. This is quite a compact statement too. The faith that he's talking about. In verse 31. Is. About Jesus. It's focused on Jesus.

[ 29 : 41 ] He's the Christ. The son of God. God. And there's. That covers a lot of things actually. But he's the Messiah. Foretold in the Bible.

He's the Messiah. Who is the king. Who comes to die. For his people. He's the son of God. Who has the power. And authority of God. He's not an ordinary person. In that sense.

And. John says. If you have faith like that. You have life. And the sort of life. That he's referring to here.

Is eternal life. If you. Read that book. Hear that word. And are captured by it.

So that you have faith. Then you. Have. Life. In his name. And he might say. What me? Yeah.

[ 30 : 36 ] Even you. You might say. Well my faith's pretty dodgy. And weak. Well. It's not so much. The dodginess. And weakness. Of the faith. But the strength. Of the person.

Whom the faith is in. If. Ordinary people. Who read this book. Like you. Because he does say you. Doesn't he? These are written. That you. May believe.

That Jesus is the Christ. The son of God. And that by believing. Even you. May have life. In his name. Pretty amazing. Statement. Isn't it?

So that was my fourth point. About this book. Which slightly explains. The. Seeing and believing thing. Which is the third. Third thing. So.

Here's some. Points for us to ponder. Value the writing. It's an amazing book. Worth reading. If you haven't read it. Read it. Get somebody to help you read it.

[ 31 : 30 ] Value the writing. Value the writing. Christian faith. Is not about. Being zapped. With sudden. Visions. And strange things.

So much as. Reading. And believing. Believing what's written. Believing the testimony. Value the writing. Second thing.

Focus on the savior. That's what he's. He's telling us. About. Jesus. That we may believe. He is the Christ. The son of God. It's the miraculous signs. That Jesus did.

In the presence of his disciples. About Jesus. I think. When we read. A sacred text. We might. Not know how to read it. We might think.

The way we're to read it. Is see whether it goes. Bing. Inside us. And gives us a funny feeling. Or something like that. But that's not the way. To read this sacred text. The way to read it. Is to say. What does it.

[ 32 : 25 ] Not what does it do to me. Or what does it tell me. About myself. But what does it tell me. About Jesus. And to focus our minds on that. Focus on the saviour.

And. The wonder and appreciation. Of this blessing. Blessed. Are those who have not seen. And yet believed. Well that's pretty amazing. Isn't it. To be. A Christian. Believer. Is a blessed thing to be.

You have life. In his name. And then I put. Ponder the possibilities. If. You. And I. Can come to faith. And God.

Is a mission God. Who's going out of his way. To invite people. And to tell more people. Even though. They didn't know. They were. Even interested. Think of the possibilities. Of that. Think of the possibilities.

[ 33 : 22 ] That. Somebody. Might pick up a Bible. And read it. Somebody might hear something. Somebody might meet a Christian. At work. And say. Tell me more about this. Ponder the possibilities.

Of what God can do. In different people's lives. And in more people's lives. That's my fourth point. And just by way of recap.

What were the points? Fear was turned to peace. That there's. This whole movement. Of sending. That. Seeing. Is believing.

In the first generation. But. Not. For. The subsequent generations. And then. This whole thing. About how we come to faith.

It's by. The signs in the book. Which we. Read of. And that's. Sufficient. Powerful. To produce. Faith in us. And bring us to eternal life.

[ 34 : 23 ] Let's go. Thank you.