

As the Father Sent Me, I Send You

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Today's scripture reading is from the Gospel according to John, chapter 20, verses 19 to 31, as printed in the liturgy.

On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of 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. 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.

[1 : 18] 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 finger where the nails were and put my hands 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 finger 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. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

[2 : 27] 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 gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ. Let's pray. Lord, we want what you want for us.

Faith and life in the name of your Son. Abundant life, eternal life, resurrection life. That's what we want to know. That's what we want to experience. That's what we want for our broken world.

So Lord, in the preaching of your word, in the preaching of your risen Son, would you show us that life? Would you give us a taste of that life in his name? Amen. All right, so this is my last sermon until August 16th.

I'm kind of hoping it's the last sermon I ever preach. I'm kind of praying that Jesus returns before the end of my sabbatical. That'd be awesome. And what I'm not praying for right now is revival, because I'd be so bummed if that happened while I was gone, all right?

[3 : 41] So just hang on for a little bit, all right? But yeah, I'm heading out on sabbatical. And as I've been preparing for sabbatical, you know that I've been reflecting a lot on time.

You probably hear it in all my sermons recently. And with this upcoming sabbatical, it's really been forcing me to think more deeply about my relationship to work and what Sabbath means and looks like in my life.

And a question that I came across recently in my scripture reading was this question that's in Ecclesiastes chapter 1 verse 3. It's the wisdom literature in the Old Testament scriptures. And the writer asked this question.

He asked, what does anyone gain by all his hard work at which he works hard under the sun? And right before that in verse 2, he says, nothing but vapor, totally vapor.

Everything is just vapor that vanishes. And this has really caught my attention because I'm about to step into this, you know, temporary season of like intentionally not working.

[4 : 43] Pushing pause on my labor under the sun. And it's raising all kinds of existential questions for me, really. Like, who am I apart from my work?

What am I supposed to do with my time if I'm not building and contributing and producing? And then underneath that, when I dig even deeper, like, what have I even accomplished in my work over these past eight years?

What do I have to show for it? And like, what difference is it going to make when I go on sabbatical and stop working? And then I flipped over the next day to the next chapter of Ecclesiastes chapter 2 and I read this.

He writes, but when I turned my attention to everything that my hands had done and to how hard I had worked for it, note this, it was all vapor, all chasing the wind.

There was no benefit under the sun. My first thought was, I should just take a really long sabbatical then. That's what it means, right? It's all vapor, it doesn't matter how hard I work, whether I work.

[5 : 47] But really, this hit me hard. It hit me hard, like, have you ever felt the weight of this? Ever wondered what the point of all your labor, all your hard work was? Whether what you're working for would last?

Have you ever, like, wondered about that? You know, Ecclesiastes, it can be one of the most depressing books in the Bible because it pulls no punches, it tells it like it is.

If this is all there is, life under the sun as we know it, everything is meaningless, it says. But you know, the purpose of Ecclesiastes isn't simply to point out the futility of life under the sun.

No, the point is actually to have our hearts and our hopes set on something above the sun, something transcendent, something out of this world, something that defies the cyclical pattern of life that's become so familiar and inescapable to so many of us.

But the question is, is there even such a thing above the sun? And if so, what is it? Well, this is the second Sunday of Easter and what I'd like to propose is that that transcendent out of this world power, that thing that we all know we need and yet maybe have trouble believing because it's too good to be true, I'd like to propose that that above the sun reality that turns all meaninglessness upside down is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 12] I love how the Yale historian, he puts it this way, his name's Yaroslav Pelikan. He wrote, if the resurrection of Jesus actually happened, then nothing else really matters. And if the resurrection of Jesus did not actually happen, then nothing else really matters.

You see what he's saying? He's saying that if Jesus isn't risen from the dead, then Ecclesiastes truly is the most depressing piece of literature of all time. Everything is meaningless vapor. But if Jesus is risen, then what we have is the most meaningful central fact of history that relativizes and reorders everything else.

What he's saying is if the resurrection is true, then this changes everything. And yet here, when you turn to John chapter 20, it doesn't look like much has changed after Jesus' resurrection, right?

At least not anything significant, positive, or clarifying, right? Up to this point, only a few people have seen Jesus. Mary Magdalene and the two disciples who are on the road to Emmaus.

But even that hasn't really changed anything. We know from the other gospel accounts that when Mary told the disciples what she saw, they didn't believe her. They've heard the report. They know the tomb is empty.

[8 : 26] Peter and John saw it for themselves, but they don't know what to do with it. And though Jesus told Mary to tell them, hey, meet up with me in Galilee. I'll see you there.

They're all staying put here in Jerusalem. They're not out in the streets. They're not preaching boldly. They're not organizing a movement. They're inside. The doors are locked.

And they're afraid. Because the same leaders who had arrested, tried, and crucified Jesus, they're still out there. And what might they do to the ones who just a few days earlier had ushered him into Jerusalem as king, singing as loudly as they could, Hosanna to the King of Kings?

These disciples, they were exposed. Everyone knew their faces. They were Jesus's unmistakable Galilean groupies, right? So imagine these disciples huddling in this room, door locked, out of fear, sitting in silence, carrying the shame of deserting the rabbi.

Heads down, hope gone. We had hoped that he was the Messiah, right? We gave three years of our life following him, positioning ourselves in his kingdom, building our futures around this guy. [9 : 35] But now what? Is Matthew supposed to go back and collect taxes? Are James and John, Peter and Andrew supposed to go back to fishing? Is Simon the Zealot supposed to go back to his domestic terrorism?

And on top of all that, there's confusion. Confusion over what Mary has seen, what the two disciples are reporting. We've seen Jesus. The tomb is empty. By the time we get to our passage here in John 20, verse 19, Christ is risen.

The tomb is empty. But the disciples are paralyzed. Paralyzed by fear and shame and disappointment and confusion. They have no direction, no idea what to make of the last three years of their lives, let alone the last three days.

And it's into this locked room, into the middle of these directionless disciples that Jesus enters, full of grace and truth, coming to change their lives in ways they'd never dream or imagine.

Jesus enters the room, re-enters their lives, and he comes to do what he'd done for them all along. The thing that he loves to do for all his disciples, he enters that room to supply all their needs according to the riches of his glory.

[10 : 43] And that's what I want to show you this morning from this text, what the risen Christ graciously gives to his disturbed, directionless, and doubting disciples. Starting here in verse 19, what we see is that the first thing the risen Lord does here for his disciples is he just comes to them.

He comes to them. He pursues them. Like he, even as the risen Lord of glory, right, the defeater of death, the one to whom all nations now have every reason to come and turn and flock and bow because of what he has just done to save the world and break the curse.

Though he had every reason to expect for them to come to him out of a realization of who he is and what he's just done. No, he doesn't wait for them to come to him. No, the one who said, it is finished, said, I'm going to do some more and I'm going to go to them.

I'm going to look for them. I'm going to be with them. I'm going to pursue them, though they deserted me because of my gracious character. Because of his gracious character, what he wants for them is his presence and his peace.

This is the first thing we see him do here. He graciously pursues them with his presence and his peace. Look at verse 19. It's Resurrection Sunday, the most amazing day in history thus far, the day that hope and new creation have broken into our broken world, right?

[12 : 00] And while his disciples don't dare to believe it, but instead lock themselves in a room out of fear, Jesus somehow meets them in that locked room. He says, it says here that he came and stood among them.

And his first words to them, though they very well could have, maybe even should have been words of disappointment, correction, reprimand. I told you so. How could you forsake me? Where's your faith? They aren't words of rebuke.

They're words of blessing and comfort. They're words of grace and peace. Literally, he says, peace be with you. Those are his first words to them. And he says it three times. Shalom Aleichem. Peace be with you.

He meets them with his peace and presence. Peace be with you. I am with you. This isn't just a greeting. This is a gift. He's not telling them to calm down here.

He's saying, I have something for you. You can have this. It's me. I'm here now. You can have my presence. And my presence is your peace. And listen, this isn't just any kind of presence and peace, but it's a unique, new, out of this world, above the sun, new creation, resurrection life kind of presence and peace.

[13 : 09] You see, his resurrection meant that a new kind of peace had just broken into the world. Peace with God and peace over death and in the face of the worst kinds of suffering. Look at verse 20.

It says that he showed them his hands and his side where he'd been pierced by nail and spear. What he was showing them was not just evidence that it really is me, that I'm the same one that was crucified up on that cross.

No, he was showing them the price of their peace, which was his life, his suffering. His body pierced for their transgressions, paying the wages of sin, which is death, in order to atone for the sins that separated them from God, who is the source and sustainer of life.

This is not a generic peace he's speaking to them, but a cosmic peace that he's paid for with his blood. It's peace with God. And it's not just peace with God.

It's peace over death. Peace no matter what kind of suffering may face them. That's what I've risen to win for you, he says to them. True and lasting peace. Peace that even death cannot steal from you.

[14:14] You see, Jesus wasn't just there showing them his scars. He didn't have to be alive for them to see his scars, his piercings. But by showing them the piercings of his crucifixion as now a resurrected, like fish-eating man, he's showing them that in addition to peace with the Holy Creator who hates sin, that's an incredible thing in and of itself.

He's also giving them peace to endure our sin-stained creation. Peace over death and suffering. He's offering here so much more than a momentary calm, so much more than relief from stress, but a peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that actually holds and lasts no matter what might break or fall apart.

That kind of peace, the kind of peace that we're all looking for, really, and yet maybe struggle to believe actually exists. Because, like, everything in this world just feels so fragile, right?

So how can peace be possible when so much of what we hold dear, even life itself, feels like it could be taken away from us at just any moment? The next pandemic, the next war, the next global crisis, the next personal tragedy.

How can we believe there's peace? And because most of us kind of don't believe that peace is possible, what do we do? Most of us try to, we try to armor up, right?

[15:32] Protect ourselves, scramble for control, fight to stay ahead. Or maybe our armor is simply just distraction, numbness, just not caring that much.

Everything's meaningless anyway. There's this phenomenon that's very interesting to me, particularly in East Asia, but it's here in the States too, but you especially find it in Hong Kong and South Korea and Japan.

People, the Japanese call this hikikomori. Hikikomori, basically young people, mostly millennials, a lot of Gen Z, Gen Alpha, who out of fear of the outside world, because of all the pressures that exist, because of all the possible academic and social and economic failures that they could face, they just shut themselves up in the rooms for months, even years, because it feels safer to just exist in their bedrooms, in their controlled, curated, and often digital worlds, than in the real world.

Because like in their digital world, their video game avatar can still take risks, even die a million times, but there's always the restart button, right? So these bedrooms basically provide nice, low-stakes living, an unlimited dopamine device, and no-cost, unlimited resurrection.

And for many, it's a wonderful haven. Now, in case you high-achieving Gen Xers and millennials, in case you boomers here are shaking your heads right now at this phenomenon, right?

[17:10] What if instead we gazed upon this phenomenon with compassion? Because whether we armor up through distraction, like the hikikomori, or through diligence, like all the rest of you, at the end of the day, we're all trying to do the same thing.

We're all trying to build a life that feels secure. So maybe for the boomer that looked like securing a career, getting a job at a Fortune 500 company, building a nice nest egg, climbing the ladder.

But what if for the Gen Zer, it just means living less ambitiously off their boomer parents' nest eggs? At the end of the day, it's just different ways of armoring up.

And sure, over time, this armoring up can start to feel kind of like peace. Maybe some of us think that this is as close to peace as we'll get. But deep down, we all know that there's no way, there's no way to cover all our bases, no way to account for all our vulnerabilities.

Deep down, we know that all this armor, it's just coping. It's not peace. It's not peace. And then see what, see, that's what, that's what Jesus is offering here.

[18:25] Not a coping technique, but real, actual peace. Not the delay, not the denial of death or distraction from it, but the defeat of death. The disciples, they were not so unlike the hikikomori.

They locked themselves in that room, not sure what their next move was. They were paralyzed, hopeless, and fearful of everything outside. But the good news of the risen Christ here is that you don't have to win or manufacture your own peace.

That's the gospel. No, Jesus comes after you in your locked room, and he offers you his peace and his presence. Peace, peace be with you, because I, the conqueror of death, I want to be with you.

This is really the only hope for the world. The only thing that can actually fill us with joy as it did for his disciples when they recognized it, that the Prince of Peace, pierced for our sins and yet risen, wants to be with us and wants us to have his peace, wants to fill us with his peace.

He was saying to them, and he's saying to us, you don't have to stay in your locked rooms anymore, because not only do I give you resurrection, peace in the face of death, and suffering of peace and hope and comfort that is stronger than death and pain, but I've also risen to give you purpose and power.

[19 : 55] See, not just presence and peace. Purpose and power is what he gives us as the risen Lord. Verse 21, again, Jesus said, peace be with you. And then listen, as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

You see, the peace of Christ, it was never meant to be the end of your story, but really actually just the foundation, just the beginning of your mission and calling in this world, that's what the peace of Christ does.

Jesus doesn't give his disciples peace so they can just sit in it, enjoy it in the shade and in safety. He gives them peace so that they can go out into the world to serve him and to serve others in his name.

Those who've received and believed in the unshakable peace of the resurrected Christ, they don't retreat. They don't hide. They don't devote themselves to just armoring up for the rest of their lives. No, they go where they are sent. They launch out of their hiding places, out of their locked rooms. They don't live in fear. They live in peace. They don't sit in paralysis. They live with purpose and direction.

[20 : 51] But, you know, I think for a lot of us, we are quite content to just receive Jesus' peace. And while we might be grateful for it, we're not actually moved or compelled by it.

We're not inspired by it. It doesn't animate us. So we go right back to what we know, right? We wake up every morning thanking God for his peace and kindness, but then we head out the door to continue living just like everybody else.

Go to work, not on mission, not as children of God, citizens of the kingdom sent out by King Jesus, but as people still just trying to armor up and level up.

When we could be living out of Jesus' resurrection life, instead we go just try to make a living, right? We uncritically just plug ourselves in as, you know, cogs in massive industrial machines, and we just structure our lives not around Jesus' mission, not around making him known, not around leading people into deep relationships with Christ and his church through community for the city, but around a different set of C's.

Comfort, convenience, consumerism. And I'm not saying quit your jobs, become missionaries and pastors like me, or even becoming non-profit workers or something like that.

[22 : 08] What I'm asking is what might it look like as an engineer, as a nurse, as an investor, as a stay-at-home mom, as a retiree, what might it look like for the peace of Christ to influence your day-to-day, your work, your time, your relationships, your finances?

What might it look like for us to reframe our mission and purpose, to think of it not just as surviving, but to think of it as us being sent by the risen Lord, whose peace and presence are with us?

This is what Jesus is trying to convey to his fearful disciples, to his disciples who just a few moments earlier had locked themselves in a room, afraid of the outside world. Jesus says to them, as the Father sent me with his peace and presence, so also I am sending you with my peace and my presence into that outside world that you are so afraid of, you don't have to be afraid anymore. To these disciples who are probably wondering what jobs, what callings they'd need to return to, since their rabbi, the one they thought was the Messiah, had just been arrested and crucified. To these disciples who thought that they lost their purpose as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, the risen Christ gives them a purpose.

He has a plan for them, to send them out as apostles, as his messengers, as his witnesses, as those who exist to make Jesus known. To make known who he is, what he's done, and what that means for the world, from Jerusalem to Judea, to the ends of the earth.

[23 : 35] You know, a lot of people like to debate in this text, like, what was he talking about? Like, as the Father sent me, so I'm sending you. And they focus a lot on, okay, maybe we should just be doing all the stuff that Jesus did.

All those acts, all those signs. Did he mean go out and do a ton of miracles, heal a bunch of people? Did he mean go out and preach and teach? And honestly, it probably is all of that. But, you know, I've begun to wonder, if when Jesus said, as the Father sent me, so I am sending you, what if it's less about, I'm sending you to go and do certain kinds of things? And what if it's more about, I'm sending you to go and be certain kinds of people? Like, as the Father has sent me as his beloved son, so I am sending you as his beloved children, beloved children of God.

And as the Father has sent me with a perfect purpose and plan, so I am sending you to trust in his plan. And as the Father has sent me to give myself away compassionately, selflessly, sacrificially, like a servant, so I am sending you to give yourselves away for the good of others.

[24 : 38] What if what Jesus was getting at was not just do what I did, but go in the same way and manner, empowered by the same Spirit that I went in?

I think that's what he's getting at here in verse 22 when he breathes on them. He says, receive the Holy Spirit. He doesn't just send us with purpose, but with power. The same Spirit that empowered Jesus' entire ministry and even raised him from the dead, Jesus doesn't leave his disciples with just presence, peace, and purpose.

He gives them power. Power to accomplish the purpose. He sets before them. Remember again who he's talking to, the same men who denied him, the same men who even when given good reasons to believe in the resurrection, they chose fear and hiding, but here Jesus is sending them, of all people, to embark on his mission.

How does that make any sense? How is that a good winning strategy? How is that a good idea? Well, the answer is that it's not about them, but it's about the power that he's supplying to them. It's not about them. It's about what he's trying to accomplish in and through them, through the Holy Spirit. And you know, this works the same for us when Jesus calls you to love someone difficult, to stay in a hard marriage, to fight sin and temptation, to live openly as a follower of Christ, in public, in your workplace, in your neighborhood, in your social spheres.

[26 : 01] It is a big calling. It is a hard calling. It is an impossible calling. I know you feel that. And it makes sense that when you think to yourself, it makes sense when you think to yourself, I don't know if I have it in me.

I don't know if I have enough in my tank. But see, that's exactly the point. That's exactly what the gospel teaches. You can't do it. Jesus never intended for you to live the Christian life out on your own, out of your own resources, out of your own diligence and grit.

That's only the first, like, that's the bad news. That's the first half of the gospel. You can't do it. But the second half of the gospel is that what you lack, what we all forfeited when we turned our backs on God in unbelief, what we forfeited, Jesus graciously supplies.

Look, he's not saying go here, but he says receive. He says receive the Holy Spirit. Receive power and life and joy and inspiration and understanding. And even authority.

Look at verse 23. He's inviting them to receive the authority, to declare good news in his name of who is and who isn't forgiven. Not because churches can grant forgiveness.

[27 : 08] Only God can. And not because churches are infallible institutions. But as the apostles and their successors preach the gospel, as we preach the gospel, as we tell the world that forgiveness belongs solely to those who are united with Christ by faith, Jesus is breathing this mission, this purpose, this power and authority into them.

And this is new creation power he's giving them. The breath of God doing what it did from the beginning, Genesis chapter 2, at the creation and what he promised to do again in the new creation through the prophet Ezekiel.

The resurrected Christ has so much to give to us, so much to give to his disciples, to his disturbed disciples, to his distracted disciples.

He gives us resurrection, presence and peace. And to his directionless disciples, he gives purpose and power. But what he also gives is his assurance.

He meets them with his presence and peace. He sends them with his purpose and power. And then he reassures them with his proofs and promises. Now maybe at this point, you're tracking with all the implications of the risen Christ and how if it's true, it really does, it really should change everything and nothing else could matter as much as this.

[28 : 27] But maybe that's exactly the issue that you're hung up on. Did it actually happen? Did it really happen? Or like, what do I do with my doubts about Jesus and the resurrection?

And how can I have assurance about him? Well, that's where it's time to turn our attention now to Thomas. Man, I feel like this guy, I feel like he gets a bad rap, okay?

So many of us think about him as doubting Thomas. But I like to think of him as the honest, authentic one whom Jesus loved and whom Jesus revealed himself to.

I mean, basically, when the rest of the disciples are telling Thomas, we've seen Jesus, he's risen, bro. You gotta believe us, right? Thomas just says here in verse 25, what many of us feel.

Unless I can see, unless I can touch, unless I can verify this, I will not believe. I've walked with a handful of you who have said very similar things.

[29 : 25] I get it. Thomas gets it. This apostle, he gets it. And we might think, well, you know, Thomas got pretty lucky. If I could just see what Thomas saw, then I would believe too.

And I, you know, I think a lot of us can be like, well, that was, it was easy for Thomas. Must be nice. He got to see Jesus risen. Wish I could see it too. And we can even think to ourselves that, man, Thomas didn't even need to have any faith.

I wish I didn't need to have faith either. I wish Jesus would just show up right now and prove himself to me. But would you be convinced? Look carefully at the text.

Jesus, he invites Thomas to touch his wounds. But what the text never says, he does. It just says, Thomas responds, my Lord and my God.

Do you see what's happening here? See, even Thomas, in the presence of evidence, he still has to take a leap of faith. Like, honestly, he could have, actually, he could have carried out a more thorough investigation.

[30 : 26] Let me check that wound out a little bit more. I mean, wait a couple thousand years for some DNA testing, right? Maybe, Jesus, did you have a twin? Did you have a twin? Because maybe that's how this happened? No.

He could have subjected Jesus in front of him to more and more doubt and scrutiny if he had wanted to. How do we know, right? How do we know?

Thomas could have drawn many conclusions other than that Jesus was crucified, dead, buried, and risen, and therefore, both Lord and God. But here he is, not doubting Thomas, but believing, trusting, worshiping Thomas.

See, there is no version of Christianity where faith is not required. Not for the apostles who saw the risen Christ and not for us who don't see him. So, if you're here today finding it difficult to believe in God and you even think to yourself, like Bertrand Russell, you know, even if I should die and be surprised and have to stand before God and he confronts me with my unbelief, I will plan to point my finger back at him and say, not enough evidence.

If that's you today, can I just ask you honestly to consider what would actually even constitute proof for you? Is there really any amount of evidence that could actually convince you?

[31 : 46] Or have you already made up your mind about what you are and what you aren't willing to believe and trust in and devote your life to? And have you simply just put the resurrection into the category of things you aren't willing to believe?

Can we just be honest about this? Can I just ask you to be honest about this? About all the things that you are willing to believe by at least some measure of faith? Like whether or not your spouse actually loves you?

Right? Whether or not the sun will rise tomorrow or that airplane you're planning to get on this summer can be trusted with your life? If we're honest, we believe and trust all kinds of things without absolute certainty, without exhaustive verification or maximum indubitable evidence because the truth of the matter is no one can live without such faith and trust.

So the question isn't whether or not I can have faith but whether or not faith in Jesus' resurrection is reasonable and reasonably supported by the available evidence.

And you know, to add to this, I might also encourage you to consider not only is it reasonable but is it personally compelling, existentially satisfying? You know, I think what happened with Thomas here.

[32 : 58] Again, it doesn't say he went and touched Jesus' hands and sighed. Jesus simply graced Thomas with his presence and spoke gracious inviting words to him and then something clicked. All of a sudden, Thomas no longer needed to take a magnifying glass to observe Jesus' wounds but all of a sudden he went from wanting to observe Jesus with a microscope to beholding Jesus with eyes of faith because see, what you have to understand about Christianity is that no one is ever just proved or evidenced into accepting the Christian faith is true.

In fact, just believing that Christianity is true doesn't even make you a Christian. It doesn't mean you're united with Christ and right with God. The scriptures teach that Satan knows and acknowledges the truth about who God is, who Jesus is, what Jesus has done but he does not enjoy union and communion with the living God.

No, a Christian isn't just someone who intellectually agrees with Christianity but someone who loves, adores, and worships Jesus because of who Jesus is and because of what Jesus has done for them.

And I think that that's what's happened for Thomas. He thought he needed proof of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection but what he actually beheld was a proof of a greater kind, a proof of God's love, proof of God's commitment, proof that God was willing to go to the furthest lengths, even to death on a cross to bring resurrection into our broken world.

Thomas went from wanting to observe Jesus' wounds as true versus false to beholding Jesus' wounds as the most beautiful, most compelling, life-changing sight that he'd ever laid eyes on.

[34 : 25] My Lord and my God, he declared. The boldest, really, the boldest, the most worshipful claim we've encountered about Jesus in all the Gospels. This is the climax of the Gospel of John.

This is what John wanted for all his readers to take these words on our lips as they came upon Thomas' lips, to do so in response to what Thomas beheld, the wounds of Christ.

This is the most compelling thing about Christianity. Not that some wise teacher came and said some really great stuff about loving others selflessly. And not even that God appeared to the world in the flesh, but more importantly that this God who appeared to the world in flesh, he didn't just come teaching about selfless love, but he came demonstrating it by his wounds upon a cross.

The beauty of Christianity is the wounded God who it proclaims as the most worthy, honorable, possible God that we could worship and trust.

this is the proof that the risen Jesus provides, proof that maybe you didn't even think to look for, proof that he loves you. He's a God who wants us to be assured of this, not just of his existence, not just of his death and resurrection, but of his love and promises.

[35 : 39] His promise that we can truly be blessed if we just believe in him. Even and especially without seeing him, that is the blessing he wants for us, that is the blessing worth seeking, that's what he's saying in verse 29.

He has each and every one of us in his mind and heart when he says these words, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Are you bold enough to want that blessing?

That's the heart of God for you, for us. He wants us to be blessed. As it says in verse 31, he wants us to have life and life in his name, life in him, life with him and he wanted it so bad he sent his son to die for it.

If we would just believe that he is the Messiah, the son of God, slain for our sins and risen to an abundant and imperishable life that he wants to enjoy with us forever, that he's won and purchased by his wounds, this life, this resurrection life and peace and presence and purpose and power, all his promises, they can be ours if we would be willing to accept the proof of his resurrection, the proof of his love by faith.

So let's go to him. Let's pray. Lord, help our unbelief and would your proof not just be intellectually satisfying to us but beautiful.

[37 : 02] Will we come to love more than the proof and the evidence of the resurrection, the proof of your love in the wounds of our Savior, which we will remember at this table.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen.