

A Collect for Easter

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[0 : 00] The prayer book, we are going to look at a collect from the prayer book today. The prayer book, we're using it again, the early service this morning, it's a great book.

It's been likened to, I think this is a great picture of the prayer book, an analogy or whatever. The prayer book has been likened to a cathedral. You know, the way to get to know it, it's a very simple picture, but very instructive.

The way to get to know it, a cathedral, is simply to investigate its many nooks and crannies. I'm sure you've had that experience. I hope you have a gallery, a side chapel, some obscure plaque. It might just yield something very intriguing. Cathedrals do that for us. So with Easter and the resurrection still in mind, I hope it is still in mind in the church year.

We're still celebrating the Lord's resurrection. I've been looking about this book, the prayer book, and I came across a collect. I don't have to refer to a prayer book specifically this morning.

[1 : 03] On page 262, I just came across this. When I read it, I was very surprised by it. A collect, which you'll see, highlights St. Thomas the Apostle, as this collect calls the Lord's disciple.

Known famously as Doubting Thomas. I take it, I don't know for sure, that's a subsequent nickname given to Thomas for obvious reasons.

In the scriptures, he's called Thomas the Twin. So he seems to be a chap who sort of attracted nicknames for some reason. Maybe that meant that there was, people attract nicknames.

Maybe people feel affection for them. There's something nice about a person that gets a lot of nicknames, like yes. So, I want to just, obviously, first thing off, I just want to put this collect in front of us.

Again, this is all by way of my introduction. The collect says, Almighty and ever-living God begins, Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, To whom with thee and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and forevermore.

[2 : 36] Amen. Remember that comment, which is obviously true.

It's a bit Tory-ish, too, the prayer book on occasion. But that ending, Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, To whom with thee and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and forevermore.

Amen. Almost written to echo around in a cathedral. It's got that feeling to it. It's beautiful, nevertheless. Dr. Hindmarsh, again, that was a wonderful talk he gave us, wasn't it?

Spoke with us a few weeks back about colics, didn't he? I think he, from memory, colics is Latin *collectiva* or something.

The gatherings of prayer. They gather the church's prayer. I guess there's something like intense or concentrated words of, we could call them prayer wisdom.

[3 : 33] I hope they are because I'm going to try and find wisdom with you in this collect today. Prayer wisdom. It's always good to be reminded of obvious things.

You would call our Lord died with prayer wisdom from the Psalter on his lips, didn't he? Into your hands, he said to his father, I commit my spirit.

So he had the prayer book language in his mind. Oh, sorry, the Psalter language so in his mind that it would naturally come out of him as he died.

Just think about that. That's how much words of Holy Scripture, in this case the Psalter, was in the mind of a first century Jew like Jesus. He died with that set piece language in his heart, on his lips.

So it is good to know prayer. We pray and we know what we pray. There's a subtle distinction there. Think real.

[4 : 40] So knowing more about prayer, one would hope is not idle knowledge. I hope you would agree with that. It opens up, doesn't it, new avenues of prayer.

Something more happens as we pray. Prayer opens up hope, doesn't it? Prayer. Our culture will learn as we become prayer-less.

That without prayer you become without hope too, I think. Prayer opens up vistas of hope. Vistas of possibility. A word I want to emphasize today.

Hope here means there remains further ranges of relationship in prayer. More to know and experience. If I may come back to this metaphor again.

More to know and experience in the cathedral. May I say this? In the cathedral that we call God. I think God could be likened to a cathedral.

[5 : 42] You've got to spend time with God, as we often say about prayer. Spending time. You have to spend time there to get to know the mystery of it all. God is like a cathedral.

There's vistas again of possibility that open up when we pray. I'm still in introduction mode here. I want to jump over to something written way later than our prayer book.

But I think words of wisdom as well. Now, you've heard of Emily Dickinson, the American poet, 19th century.

I've heard poems. She wrote marvelous little poems. Thousands of them. Very eccentric, strange, wonderful woman. Just love Emily Dickinson.

Her little poem says this. You've already read it all that. You can zip through her poems quickly. I've been reading this. I've got this obviously memorized. This is easy to know. I've been saying this poem to myself for the last three weeks or so.

[6 : 48] It constantly feeds me. It's one of the things poems will do. One of the things colex will do for you. This little poem from Emily. I'm going to call her that.

We're buddies. This little poem. These little dashes you see in her poem. I heard she dashed. If I may call it that. Her poems. I dwell in possibility.

A fairer house than pro. More numerous of windows. superior for doors. How long it took her to write that.

It's perfect. Emily, thank you. I dwell in possibility. A fairer house than pro. More numerous of windows.

Superior for doors. That words from, again, Emily Dickinson. The poet here thinks about her art. An expert I know writes about Emily.

[7 : 46] He's my authority for this reading. The poet here thinks about her art. She's thinking about her chosen profession. Poetry. And she contrasts poetry with prose.

Here construed. Possibility is construed as the life of the poet. Contrasted here with prose.

A life of prose. Prose, if you will, is life lived in the usual expectation of more of the same. I think that's what she's saying here.

But poetry, Emily Dickinson certainly believed this, might discover the unexpected. Might discover the surprising. It was her hope.

Such was her hope. This wonderful woman, Emily Dickinson. Emily, and I bring her up. They say, well, what's Emily doing here beside Thomas? Well, if you know Emily's life, Emily was a member of the Doubting Thomas fraternity.

[8 : 56] Definitely. Emily was a doubter all of her life. There's a lot more to her life than doubt. There was a lot of faith there, too. But she had a doubt streak in her.

A doubt ma'am, I guess, one of those scientists would say. She hovered between belief and unbelief, often. She wanted certainty.

Doesn't this sound a bit like Thomas? She wanted certainty, but was uncertain. Seems to me, at least, as I read about her and her poetry. She was uncertain about the dynamics of what you might call faith certainty.

As was the Lord's disciple, St. Thomas, obviously. If I may stay with this poet contrast thing, what could be more, if you will, prose-like than the question, or more like the question-assertion posed by Thomas to his disciple colleagues?

You think about Thomas now, what he's famous for. Remember, Thomas said, unless I see him. Unless I see him.

[10 : 12] When I thrust my hands into his wounded side. When I touch scarred hands. Well, until then, he says to his disciple colleagues, I will not believe.

That was the famous, that's the famous sensibility, the temporary stance, at least, of Thomas, the doubter that the collect speaks about. I won't believe unless I'm in his presence and I touch him.

It seems, in tightened up language, it seems as if Thomas says, I want immediacy with Jesus on my terms.

On my terms, I'll believe in Jesus. That seems to be, it goes to, and in the discussion time, you can tell me if that's the real Thomas thing.

I live, I dwell in possibility. I live, I've lived in possibility. I dwell in possibility. I dwell there.

[11:16] I am open to further possibilities regarding this man, Jesus. Thomas might have said. What if he had said that? And then the disciples come to him and say, he's risen.

He would have believed. He didn't dwell in possibility, Thomas. He dwelt in prose, I guess we could say. But apparently he wasn't like that, Thomas.

He wasn't prepared so to reason, so to believe. The Hebrew scriptures, this is the whole worldview in which Thomas lived with his Lord and with the disciples, with all the writers of the New Testament.

The Hebrew scriptures might be called an expectation narrative, I think. They might be called a hope narrative. Or with a nod to Emily Dickinson, to dwell in the Old Testament is to dwell in possibility.

There's possibility there. Just to leap to something completely modern and where this idea of possibility seems to me to be so important.

[12:31] Sometimes you'll hear it said that the world just came out of nothing. I heard, it's on my mind, because I heard Stephen Hawking say that not long ago, one of his endless documentaries made about the famous physicists.

He said, in this stage, I don't know where he stands, I guess he shifts around, but when this documentary was made, it didn't seem very old, he said, I just don't need, I don't believe in God, the world came out of nothing.

I'm content with that. But that must mean that somehow something was possible in nothing. That's what I would want to say to him.

The nothing must contain possibility. And a good metaphysician, which he is not, would say to him, you're cheating, that's not really nothing. If nothing contains possibility, then it's not nothing.

You're cheating there. Possibility, I bring this Emily Dickinson stuff up, obviously for reasons, I love her poetry. Possibility, I think, is a synonym for faith.

[13:41] With God, all things are possible. So, as a Christian, you dwell in possibility. You have to, by definition.

I dwell, I live there, it's my house. I dwell in possibility, a fair, much nicer place to live than pro. Thomas didn't get that. I don't think he got it.

Our collect exalts faith, obviously. And we're going to go through the collect line by line. It calls us to a quality of faith which pleases God, which doesn't need to be rebuked.

Here is an issue which causes and reveals confusion, I'm sure it does in me and a lot of us. Faith. Faith. What is faith? On one popular view, famously, faith is, wonderfully, the capacity by which we believe silly and stupid things.

You know, that's what some people will say. It's a wonderful gift you Christians have. Like Alice before breakfast, you know, believed all sorts of impossible things. Faith equals, now, on the world's view, often, but faith is not that, obviously.

[14:48] Faith is believing what you believe in. Faith. Faith is believing what you believe in because it's been shown to be reliable.

Our collect, we will see, shows God and witnesses to God making the faith firm for us. And doing this as the, as the collect refers to, I think quite intriguingly, through this little drama of doubting Thomas that God suffered him to doubt.

So, again, today, this is the end of the introduction. A look at, a collect, and just with a side glance at this wonderful poem, this poetry of, I dwell in possibility, a fairer house and prose.

More of the windows there, superior for doors. So, before we look into the mystery of faith, a short word of prayer. Lord, show us the way to a faith which is so perfect and is so without all doubt that it may never be reproved by you.

Lord, increase our faith to your glory and to our benefit. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[16:10] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. So wonderful. So again, I don't want the collect to teach us, not me. So I just want to do some festooning, I think, as Lewis used to call it, of words that are in front of us.

See what goes off in our minds as we look at them. The collect begins, Almighty and ever-living God.

I don't know, I was thinking about this as Dr. Highmarsh was speaking to us about colics again, I don't know if the initial address of a colic, so the initial address here, is necessarily internally related to the rest of the colic.

I would like to think so. It would mean they're that thoughtfully constructed. After all, you can call God by many different wonderful words.

[17:43] These God attributes, again, are they germane to issues raised by this colic, and all the colics? That little issue seems to me helpful.

In the Psalms, have you noticed this, God is frequently addressed in such a way that the problem or the issue the psalmist is praying about is already raised by the way he talks to God, by the way he addresses, she addresses God.

When we are weak, that is to say, should we not pray, as psalmists do, O Lord, my strength. I'm weak, O Lord, my strength. Better even, O my strength.

God is named after the very thing the psalmist wants. O my strength. No. We pray to God, O my wisdom.

I need help in thinking through an issue. O my wisdom. Asking for strength, therefore we address God as strength. It's not a simple little thing, but I think there's wisdom there.

[18:49] The scriptures are teaching us a little bit of prayer wisdom in that fact, about the way the psalmist pray. Things, after all, in our world, they run down, they fall apart.

Centers don't hold, another poet has told us. But our God is not subject to change. God is ever living. This college wants to remind us.

Isn't that lovely? The resurrection, and this college is obviously related to resurrection, mystery in the New Testament. The resurrection is a great no to death, isn't it?

God says no to death. No. It will not rain. He's ever living. He will not have death raining.

That's a simple resurrection teaching. The ever living God will not be God without his son.

[19:51] He just will not be, will not be God without his son alive. The God man, Jesus Christ, must live. And so he exercised his almightiness and raised Jesus.

Am I finding things in the college that aren't there or are not implied there? But Dr. Hindmarsh again encouraged us to look at college maybe in this way, I think.

The almighty God raised Jesus into ever living life. God does things and sometimes God is spoken of, isn't he, as permissioning things.

So in this prayer, isn't it interesting that in the third line there we're told that this almighty and ever living God did suffer thy holy apostle to be doubtful.

He allowed, he allowed Thomas to be doubtful. He permissioned it. That's just, God is so active in the world that a little moment like this teaches to call it.

[21:02] God was at work there. Thomas thought he was doubting out of his own shrewdness or cleverness. Actually, God was allowing it for us. So teaches this collect.

It takes real faith to believe that. The holy apostle St. Thomas was allowed to doubt. That raises for me, I don't know, let's talk about festooning.

How is it with our doctrine of providence? Speaking of doubt, my guess is that many Christians, I have been in the past, are intimidated by a worldly mocking of this doctrine.

It's an easy doctrine to mock. The world thinks that when a believer says, well, I know that God did this, or God arranged these circumstances that you now see to be the case, it is meant to offer some kind of airtight demonstration, airtight demonstration of God's existence and his acts here that we might point to.

But I take it that that's not true. That's not what the doctrine of providence is about. Providence is a, in a sense, in a discussion time, I really need this addressed, but I think providence is for the most part a kind of private knowing, a kind of private knowing between the believer and God.

[22:29] You know, I know that God is at work here and he made this happen. It's such a blessing. But I can't go out to my unbelieving neighbors and say, see, this happened, and that proves everything that I believe.

Unbelief has too many clever things to say about that, and they're very convincing. It's private knowledge often between to create our God and ourselves. It's meant God's providential acts for us create, it creates in us a witness and an adoration, but it's not meant to become a syllogism on God's behalf.

Belief, belief sees providence reasonably. Unbelief sees it merely as happenstance, as coincidence.

I think that's the case. So we have to believe in this kind of, God providentially allowed Thomas to doubt. There's nothing to be proven from this. It doesn't somehow prove God's existence or something.

You have, providence encourages us to live in possibility that God will act. Did suffer Thomas to be doubtful, again, says the, call it.

[23 : 45] Just think, providence, this work of God, did this doubting in Thomas, if you will, for the more, see up here, for the more confirmation of the faith.

That's the second line. For the more confirmation of the faith. Something was at work here that's meant to instruct us. This collect wants us to know.

You don't want that little moment to go by. Last two words of the second line. Note that, that's a nice little theological touch, isn't it?

The faith. The faith. As in, the faith once delivered to the saints, as it was to Thomas' colleagues and then to Thomas. The faith.

The faith. Again, we're in a theological moment, a church moment, when that is now denied openly.

[24 : 49] Across all churches especially, like the Anglican, that is now openly more or less denied. There are many perspectives surrounding our religious life, but these many perspectives surround almost nothing.

There is no the faith anymore. Wants delivered to the saints. This is now the faith that sounds so exclusive. It may be intolerant to believe that there is this thing called the faith.

One holy Catholic and apostolic faith is those wonderful words from the creed. Another reason to hold on to the creed, isn't it? Just after I'd written this the other day, a Christian told me he attends a more different kind of Anglican church than St.

John's. In the pulpit now, it's frequent mention is made of open communion. You've probably heard of this. Welcome to the Lord's table whoever you are, atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, whatever you are.

We're just here doing religion. You might as well play the game too. There's no the faith. It doesn't exclude anything. Watch for this open communion idea.

[26 : 10] It's another tolerance agenda that will race through the church more and more. The faith. It's very unpopular to even believe it.

The faith. Later, the call that speaks of our faith at this line here, I have a number of these, that our faith in thy sight may never be reproved.

Our faith, our faith in thy sight, our faith is a participation in the faith. Our faith, the faith. This call is theologically good.

it teaches us basic, simple things that we need to be reminded of. Then the call, at least for me, and I think it will be for others, gets, I find it, especially for a modern Christian, gets weighty and challenging.

This is the heart of the matter for a modern Christian in this call, at least on occasion, when you're thinking about certain things. what's really going on in this gospel, doubting Thomas gospel moment?

[27 : 19] What is, why has God permissioned it and what is supposed to come out of it so that the faith, those of us who are believing in the faith are built up? Well, here it is.

Here it is. One, two, three, four, five, is it line five down? Amazingly, maybe this stood out for you as we read it. Did it stand out for you when you heard these words, grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in thy son Jesus Christ?

Got that? That's pretty straightforward, eh? Grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe.

That's an interesting world to enter into. Those words are a possibility, if I may coin a phrase. I live in the possibility of having a faith which is perfect and without all doubt.

That is for me weighty and challenging. I take it that in the gospel, it's a perfectly true and reasonable request, but it shocks me a bit.

[28 : 44] Perfectly, without all doubt. Modern people are not supposed to believe in much of anything, if anything, perfectly and without all doubt. remember the word of Jesus to Thomas, you're familiar with this, from Easter readings, from resurrection narrative stuff in the New Testament.

Jesus said to Thomas, when he met Thomas, and Thomas believed, our Lord famously said, Thomas, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. me. So this collect, if you will, would expand on that, would gloss that moment in John's gospel as the Lord speaks to doubting Thomas, to bring out the fullness of its meaning or its challenge, and I do find it challenging.

It's as if, according to this collect, the import of the words of Jesus to Thomas would run like this, Thomas, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe, and that perfectly, and without all doubt.

Wow, I find that just a challenge. I'm blessed and challenged just by reading this collect. Grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe.

[30 : 09] I want to just keep saying, I live in possibility of that. A fairer house than doubt. But, you have to grant, you know, we are moderns, we live in our time.

The moderns will say to us, and others, what's wrong with doubt? I mean, we have to hear this. Doubt, after all, is quite popular, and I should be, and I take it, should be popular in a sense, properly understood.

However, we know, or we should know, that in doubt, there's often vanity, and intellectual vanity easily, easily finds, takes up residence in our minds.

We like to believe in what makes us appear shrewd, and if we doubt all things, we appear shrewd, other people. We don't want to be deceived, we don't want to look foolish.

That's the dark side of doubt. doubt. But there's a doubt that is, there's a lot of foolishness in the world, there's a lot of deceit in the world, and doubt can protect you from those things.

[31 : 27] Our world, quite frankly, in many ways, prefers doubt to any kind of perfect believing, without all doubt. and the modern Christian works that through, one way or another.

This question, this question, the collect answers, questions about doubt and knowledge, this collect implies the Christian answer to what is Christian knowledge.

Knowledge is, knowledge is always about how we know really, what's my basis of knowing something. Christian knowledge follows a certain order, and it's good to see this.

It is both profound and simple. You can't state it more simply. And Christians know this, but often don't put it up there in blunt language. Try to do that. God proposes for us an object for knowledge, an object of knowledge.

knowledge. And because it is proposed for our belief by God, it may in principle be embraced perfectly and without all doubt.

[32 : 49] That's it in a nutshell. That's how Christian knowledge works. What God proposes for our belief may be believed in in a certain way.

this is an epistemology, if you will, of faith knowledge. This is how faith knowledge works.

And for those of you who are philosophers, and I know almost everyone at Lewis and Change is, it's not an aptly free knowledge. We don't have a system of knowledge that's ours and needs to certain.

God proposes how we'll know, and it turns out it's an after-the-fact knowledge. Couldn't be simpler. He raises someone from the dead. He says, believe.

He acts first. We believe. Thomas and all the original witnesses to Christ risen are unique, aren't they, in the immediacy of their knowledge of this object that God proposes for our belief.

[33 : 54] But belief in this object, this belief in this object of knowledge is divinely appointed to be based upon a witness by faith witnesses.

It's amazing. By better still, first witnesses. First witnesses. You see the subtle thing that's going on here, but it's obvious. Thomas might have believed in this way, the way that we believe.

Thomas was invited to believe in Jesus raised from the dead in the way that we believe in him. before he had his unique witness experience of being with Jesus and touching him.

This, as I try to understand it, is the simple reason for the, I take it, it's a mild rebuke that Thomas receives from his risen Lord.

Blessed Thomas are those who have not seen and yet believe. believed. You could have been amongst that category before you met me. He could have believed the way we believe.

[35 : 02] This is the way we believe. We've heard a witness to an event that God will vindicate and is true because God did it.

When you believe, you can enter into a perfect and without all doubt belief because it's God's truth. there's no other truth that you can believe in this way.

That's the Christian knowledge. You want to hear some fancy names for authorities who can expound on Christian knowledge in fancy philosophical ways.

I'll give it to you after, but not now. And what a life this kind of believing promises.

You just sense it. Yes. God says, this is what you are to believe on the basis of a witness. It's, if I may coin a phrase, it's numerous of windows, superior for doors.

[36 : 00] It opens up. This is everywhere. Meaning and hope. Just right now time, a further glory and mystery comes into view here, more of the gospel.

Was it the resurrection? There's something strange about the resurrection. We're in resurrection season and we think about these things. The resurrection was both public, not done in a corner, Paul says, in Acts.

And yet it is made public by witnesses. That's part of the mystery of this dispensation of salvation. The risen one comes and goes for a few weeks, about 40 days apparently, and then he ascends into invisibility.

Off he goes. Then an invisible spirit empowers the witness. this is the way the Christian knowledge mystery works. The demand of Thomas may be a kind of demand to force God's hand.

The equivalent of the later that we read about in the book of Acts, now will you restore the kingdom to Israel. God, all of this stuff, Thomas' demand to be in the Lord's presence, and later a strange thing, when the Lord's about to ascended into heaven, the disciples say to him, well now are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?

[37 : 21] It's as if God is invisible and will be made visible in his time, but we'd rather him be visible now. That would help. In this time, the church makes him visible in witness.

That's what we live in now. And that's what this collect teaches. Thomas, you should have believed with the church through a witness. It was almost a secondary kind of believing upon seeing the Lord.

We're going to see the Lord when he returns in glory. What that scene is going to be like, we have no idea. Grant has so perfectly and without all doubt.

That's just an amazing thing that we're permissioned by the gospel to pray this. I've encouraged myself of late since reading this call. it's good to be reminded of gospel truth.

Yes, I must pray that. I must ask God for a perfect believing, a without all doubt believing. This, I have found it so, is sobering, humbling, and challenging.

[38 : 32] I ask myself, do I want this measure of faith? Maybe we don't want to believe this way. Will it make me a bit strange, or stranger than I already am?

kind of, but, you know, the police, the police regarded as grounds for suspicion, if they come across someone who is living without any visible means of support.

How come you live so well, but we can't see what's feeding your life? Faith is it. Thomas could have believed completely, as completely as he believed when he touched Jesus.

He could have believed as perfectly from the witness as he believed well in the Lord's presence, touching his very person. That's what I learned from this collect.

Maybe I should have learned more, maybe you don't think that's much, but at my level of the faith, this is a lot. This helps me. This collect really helps me. There's wisdom in these colleges.

[39 : 34] Dr. Heimer, it collects Christian wisdom. It collects the prayers of saints over centuries, and therefore we should expect to be informed richly.

And I am when I hear grant us so perfectly and without a doubt to believe in thy son, Jesus Christ. Oh, I want to live in this possibility.

I would like to dwell in this possibility. I'll bet it's a fairer house than prose. The usual life I live in. There you go.

I want to just encourage myself, and if anybody else is listening in, to pray this prayer. Make this Doubting Thomas prayer your own.

St. Thomas, he gets a fancy title, St. Thomas the Apostle. I'm glad they didn't call him Doubting Thomas the Apostle. So, just conclude in the obvious way, prayer is the way to, it is the means of faith, certainty.

[40 : 40] I don't think Emily Dickens ever quite got there. I think she died in the faith. She was a believer, but a strange believer. She lived in that hovering place. She was a profound thinker.

I live in possibility. means I expect, I expect to be sent from heaven a certainty, for certainty to form in me.

The object of our, isn't it amazing what the apostles teach you, when you see it, from maybe from another angle, as I conclude, the object of our faith knowledge, Jesus raised, Paul says that he waits for the Galatian Christians, he waits to see him formed in them.

If Jesus is forming in you, the one who's been raised, you'll be certain, he's in me. It'll be a private knowledge in a sense, you can't go around to your friends saying, oh, but oh, there it is, grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in thy son, Jesus Christ, this one who is forming in us, as Paul says, to the Galatians.

This is the way out of doubt. The way out of the doubt that once afflicted Thomas and once afflicted this sophisticated woman, Emily Dickinson, who I'm so pleased to know her poetry.

[42 : 04] It just brings to light things in life that's good to know. Don't cultivate doubt, the Christian may be told.

Cultivate faith. Don't cultivate doubt. Don't cultivate doubt, but don't cultivate credulity.

That's superstition. The world really hates that, rightly. No, we can ask God to form a perfect faith in us, so perfectly, may it be formed in us, Lord, that it will be without all doubt because God has proposed the one that we're to believe in, the one who was raised from the dead, and that's the kind of thing, I take it, we're supposed to think about at Easter, so I wanted to say those few words out of my foggy, disappearing voice.

I want to say a word of prayer and then you can grill me with your usual questions. Lord, we thank you that Jesus has been raised from the dead, that you propose him as an object of belief for people like us, so we would believe in the way that you may form belief in us perfectly, without all doubt, creating vistas of possibility in life that we've never imagined.

So we give you thanks, Lord, for this possibility of believing, may it be realized in us. This we ask in the name of Jesus.

[43 : 40] Amen. page 62, prayer book.

Mr. Chandler. I just realized that, I don't know whether you would agree to this, but Thomas was quoting the philosophy of the apostles, because they wouldn't believe the witness either, but did they?

They didn't believe Mary's witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus had already appeared to them, and not to Thomas.

Yeah. So, isn't Thomas really quoting the whole group of the apostles? That's a very interesting point, Bill.

Yes, I mean, it's a mixed bag how the first belief was formed in these gentlemen, and in Mary Magdalene. Next week, I'm going to talk about Mary Magdalene and Mary Ann, we're going to call her.

[45 : 00] John's belief was formed without seeing the Lord. that belief was astonishing. He looked in the tomb, and it just says he believed.

That's it. His, John lay at the breast of Jesus, and he was living, if I may coin a phrase, he was dwelling in possibility as he raced to the tomb of Peter.

He could have been expecting more prose, but apparently that was enough for John. Empty tomb, yes, Jesus is greater than death. I see now he's been raised. Then he met him.

But your point is really, it's an interesting phenomenon, how is belief formed? And this collect and the drama of Thomas, and the words of Jesus says, blessed, it's one of the Beatitudes, I think, you should think of it, blessed are the people at St.

John's, known as Exchange, April 2010, they haven't seen, but we believe. We've heard the witness, we believe. So it's, but you're right, the first witnesses are a mixed bag, aren't they?

[46 : 18] That's very, very, but he gets that review, Thomas, he should have believed when you heard them say, I've been raised. I've been raised. If somebody had to start the ball rolling, somebody had to see him.

There must be more. Robert, doesn't he, doesn't Thomas come out of, out of the group to show that there's a huge division in Christianity.

There's those that believe by witness, and there's the other ones that are doubting. And they are always, you know, prove it to me, prove it to me. And here's Thomas as one of Jesus' men, who comes off in that side of being doubting to the point where he won't believe until he sticks his hands in the room.

And it just seems to me that Jesus had set it up that way so that it would look after that other group out there.

They can actually go into that cathedral and find that little nook and cranny where Thomas is and discover that they're not alone in this world.

[47 : 45] They're not alone in the prayer book. They're not alone in the prayer. Because here's a guy that he was with Jesus. Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

Yeah, he's, yeah, that fills in the formality of what I've said. I take it the Emmaus story is meant to say something like, of all things, the resurrected one starts giving them a Bible study.

And he says, have you been dwelling in this possibility? That was it not necessary? And apparently in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself were opening up.

Not through point by point proof texting, but it's as if the whole template of Jesus makes the whole mystery of the Old Testament come alive. He resurrects the Old Testament into a place numerous of windows.

So it's, yeah, Thomas, you should have been there in believing already. And then this word from your friends, we've seen it. At that point, you're supposed to believe. Belief honors God.

[49 : 01] Well, the older son and the prodigal son is like that. He just, he won't, he won't believe. He won't, he won't come in.

Yeah, it's great. It's great. I find the colic just a wonderful pathway into thinking about these things. I find it helpful.

Believing perfectly without all doubt is a strong, a strong meat for me. I see a hand. I thought I saw a hand. Can you put the colic on the screen?

Does that sound positive? Can you see that here? Yeah. What if we said in our democratic country of Canada concerning the election of a prime minister and his party, that they should stand up and say, grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in thy son Jesus Christ, that our faith in thy sight may never be reproved?

Hear us, O Lord. Why can't we say that? Why don't we insist on that? we know, well, you missed the answer, you weren't at the 730 service this morning, were you Harry?

[50 : 35] I wasn't. People who were there could answer that question for you. Opposition to the gospel is internal to the gospel, it's not an accident. So yes, what you just read is the true confession, but we live in a world that will automatically contend against it.

It has to, it's the very nature of the world to say no. So that's why we can't, because they're winning right now. Unbelief is winning right now. You can't even pretend that this would be okay in Parliament.

There's a crucifix in the Quebec National Assembly that has been officially stated it's an artifact of our culture, not of a religion.

So even if Harry, if you convinced them to do it, they'd say, yeah, it's our culture, our Anglo culture, but no one believes it. But I'm trying to answer your question seriously. I just, I don't know how you, you know, how we get around that prayer, I think, that it's where we think it's the necessity of doubt seems to be the great dimension of our culture.

Absolutely. That doubt is the really essential factor. Absolutely. And every message maintained it at all costs in order to be honest.

[52 : 17] Yeah, you're right. Well, I mean, I'm sure we all honor doubt in some sense, don't we? We have to doubt a lot. But the object of faith here is commended as so perfect by God, the ever living one, who raised Jesus into our faith sites that we can believe perfectly without all doubt.

Do you want to dwell in that possibility as a fair host and prose? I think I've been living in this poem too long now.

I can't stop quoting it. If anybody ever starts a door manufacturing company, a door manufacturing company, you should call it superior for doors.

I'm not a profound reader. I don't read poetry that profoundly, but superior for doors. There's a door in the book of Revelation, the apocalypse, isn't there?

I'm the door. I'm not sure if a window metaphor is anywhere in scripture. I delight in Emily Dickinson's numerous windows is to live in possibility.

[53 : 35] Like, this is open up. Is there a window? I guess, did they have windows? Of course, they had windows in the ancient world. Doors, the metaphor is there, superior for doors. doors. Please.

Is that door Jesus Christ? She didn't take my question. Behold, I stand at the door. Yeah, well, I hope it was for her at the end of the day. She spoke lovingly of our Lord, Emily, many times, but she doubted a lot, too.

She was an interesting woman. Sir? A window is something you look through and you see something, but a door you have to go out to experience it.

It's the difference between the window and the door. Yes, yes. But they both are possibilities, aren't they? They're wonderfully, they're both. It's a possibility.

Yes. You take an action. Yes. If you don't use the door, it's not much. That's right. I think her point seems clear enough to me.

[54 : 43] Maybe there's more subtleties there than I realized. Her mind was endlessly subtle. There you go.

Does death create a possibility of a renewed faith? Sounds good to me. Yeah. I guess it depends on the doubter, doesn't it?

What's in the middle ages? Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, there was a tag amongst the theologians, I suppose it came from a philosopher, I don't know which one, nothing is so certain as that which was once doubted.

they understood it, as I understand them, as an index of the way in which we all of us come to certainty.

That is to say, we don't really become certain of things until we have doubted them and discerned that doubt is unreasonable.

[56 : 05] For one reason or another, there are various factors that make doubt unreasonable. From that standpoint, it seems to me that the words of the collect who aren't so perfectly in the that whole doubt to believe in by Son Jesus Christ, that's foreshortening a process in which a lot of us have to, at least for the moment, side with and sympathize with Thomas and ask the question, are there really reasons to believe that he's risen from the dead?

You ask the question, you press the question and you find, my goodness, there are. When you start looking, you realize that there are overwhelming reasons and any number of them.

But until you've asked the dubious question, the question of uncertainty, you don't realize that. I would suppose that Emily Dickinson was aware of this, though I don't know whether she always did it.

That's right. Yes, it's a being formed in us process, isn't it? Yeah. Paul sees that in Galatia. I do want to press to the thought that reasonableness is a major factor when you see, as I say, that faith is reasonable and unbelief is unreasonable, which is the flip side, you see, of the same perception, shall I say, through the same window.

people. It's then that you're beginning to get somewhere. That's the way that God takes us, it seems to me, as he forms faith in us. Yes, faith obviously is in doubt, but less obviously, but equally, faith is not credulity.

[58 : 11] Yes, faith has its reasons that are profound. Some people, a friend was showing me the other day something on the internet, I think Tom Wright, I'm expanding on what is on the internet piece here, but Tom Wright is, I think, encouraged by some people that don't do this historical inquiry about Jesus.

You just preach and tell people to believe, that's proposed as better than even excluding historical inquiry. As I understand it, Tom Wright would say, no, you do both.

The church preaches, of course, but when inquirers inquire, the church is not mute, and historians are not mute, and they shouldn't be. We may reasonably inquire about Jesus.

I take it that's the import of Paul in Acts. These things were not done. In a corner, you can inquire about him. A little apostolic word like that helps me along.

So the church proclaims and shows their reasons for this. God makes our belief reasonable. The Holy Spirit works by impressing us with the force.

[59 : 25] By all means. What's the final mystery of why the heart goes one way or another? It's invisible to us, isn't it? Yes. Next week, I don't know, they're running out of speakers, so next week,

aren't I, Bill, have another look at scraping the bottom of the barrel further, and we're going to look at another resurrection narrative, the Mary Magdalene, Mary Magdalene stuff, more mysteries of the resurrection stuff.

So I look forward to that. I love looking at these resurrection things. Do you? I think they're just wonderful. They're just wonderful things in the gospel, these stories of the resurrection. They're fascinating. They're so detailed and various. They have a commonality. It's wonderful stuff. At least I find it so. Yes?

This is not a question. I want to say I don't feel that we're going to thank your checks in the mail again. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. You're very kind. Thank you.