

Jesus and Thomas

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the section we read in John chapter 20. I'm not going to read it again, but just at the beginning there we see verse 24.

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe, and so on.

One of the things that we've highlighted is how complex the characters of the disciples were. I think that's one of the beauties of the Christian church, is that although grace conquers, and grace changes, grace subdues, and grace is at work day by day, conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ, yet the uniqueness of our own individual personality still remains, and often the quirks of character.

So that the Christian church is full of people of all different types. And that's part of what makes it so interesting, and part of what makes it so refreshing in many ways.

This collection of so many different types of people. And when we looked at the disciples before, we can see that they were really a very mixed bag.

[1 : 37] Good men, but all types of personalities. And the man that we're focusing on to a certain extent today is somebody who had his own particular and unique personality, this man Thomas.

Now, as we saw before, Jesus had made two previous appearances. First of all, he had appeared to Mary Magdalene, and she was the first that Jesus revealed himself to.

And we believe that Jesus revealed himself to Mary because of her incredible love and loyalty to him.

And it's interesting, but many people think that when Jesus ascended publicly, that he did so, as we know from Bethany, and that that was also a testimony to the great faith and love of a particular home and, above all, a particular individual there, Mary as well, Mary of Bethany.

But the second revelation that Jesus gave of himself was to all the disciples. We were looking at that last week, with the exception of one, that Thomas was the one who was missing.

[2 : 48] And Thomas had a real problem believing that Jesus had risen from the dead. He was really struggling with unbelief. And we've got to admit that that is sometimes a real problem for many of the Lord's people, where there is this.

It's a strange thing. In the one hand, there is belief, but in the other hand, there is still unbelief. It's like the man who was crying to Jesus.

Oh, he said, Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief. And there are times we struggle with things. There were times Jesus turned to the disciples and he said to them, Oh, you of little faith.

Now, these were his followers. These were good men. These were men who lived in the presence and company of Jesus. And yet, times they doubted him completely. And I think it's still true today that there are times that we may, our faith may not be as it should.

We may be filled with doubts and we might even be filled with unbelief. Maybe some of the Lord's people in here today are struggling with unbelief. And maybe some old Christians who never really struggled with unbelief before are struggling with it just now.

[4 : 08] So let us look just for a moment at Thomas and see if we can learn anything about him. And I think there are two or three things that are worth highlighting. And the first is that Thomas' personality was against him.

Because from what we have gleaned before in the life of Thomas, he was a pessimist. He was the kind of person who tended to look on the dark side. Remember we highlighted that before when Jesus said, Let's go up to Jerusalem.

And Thomas said to the other disciples, Oh, well, let us go up so that we will die with him because the Jews had been threatening to stone Jesus. So when Jesus said he was going to Jerusalem automatically, Thomas thought, Oh, that's it.

We're all dead. And when Jesus was talking about how he was going to the father, Thomas says, I really, I have no idea what you're talking about.

I just don't understand. How can, how can we, where are you going? How can we know the way? And of course we know Jesus made that great statement. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

[5 : 10] It was in response to, to Thomas's gloom and, and maybe lack of understanding. But you see, this was the kind of person Thomas was.

He tended to look at the dark side. And Thomas is not alone. The church is full of Thomas's who are looking on the dark side. And some people can't help it.

Their nature is pessimistic. They are, that's the way they are. Yes, I know there's grace and grace transforms and grace changes, but we still retain so much of our own unique personality or our own unique disposition.

Some people look on the bright side. That's the way they are. And some people, they tend to look on the dark side and they struggle. And that, maybe gloomy disposition or pessimistic disposition, affects them spiritually as well.

So that they're always struggling. They love the Lord Jesus. And they believe that Jesus alone is the Savior of sinners. They believe that Jesus has done a work in them sometimes.

[6 : 20] Sometimes they feel that and other times they're afraid. what if I come short? Oh, I'm fully persuaded. The Lord has saved all these people around me. But can he really, really, really love me?

Because, you know, sometimes we have problems with that. Because when we look at ourselves and we see all our sin and all our failure and what we are and the way we disappoint ourselves, we say, can the Lord really, really love me?

But he does. He loves us far more than we love ourselves. He loves us far more than we can ever understand. It'll take us an endless eternity to discover the fullness of that love.

So, some of the Lord's people, because of their particular personality, they have a difficulty. Another thing that happened to Thomas his faith was shattered because things didn't work out the way he expected.

Thomas had it all worked out. He was a follower of Jesus. And he expected, along with others, that Jesus was going to establish an earthly kingdom and that the Jews were once again going to be the people.

[7 : 39] And he expected to be part of that and he was waiting for Jesus to be made a king and for his kingdom to be established. And Jesus ended up being arrested and, we know, tied, flogged, and crucified.

There was nothing in Thomas' thinking, even though Jesus had been telling them what was going to happen, Thomas had never grasped it. And so, Thomas really struggled with this.

Everything that he had hoped, everything that he had kind of believed in, it had become, it was shattered. But this happens in our lives as well. Because, you know, so often we plan out our lives. We think we know how life is going to go. And as Christians, we're trusting the Lord and then, bang, something happens. And our life is turned upside down.

Nothing is going the way we hoped, the way we planned, even the way we prayed. And it can sometimes shake us to the very core. And sometimes, our faith takes our real dump.

[8 : 49] And we, sometimes, we take a while trying to figure things out. Well, that's where Thomas was at this particular time. But then there was another thing with regard to Thomas.

He was on his own. Thomas was separate from the other believers, the other disciples, when Jesus came. And again, we find that this wasn't a good thing.

Because we need each other. Company is important. Remember, at the very beginning, even in a sinless world, the Lord said, it is not good for man to be alone.

So, we haven't been made for isolation. We've been made for company. We've been made for togetherness. And it's particularly true within the Christian life that we need one another.

That great saint in the Bible, in the Old Testament, Elijah, we find him in his collapse that one of the things that brought about his collapse was his sense of isolation.

[9 : 51] Remember what he said to the Lord? I, even I only, am left. That wasn't true, but that's the way he felt. He felt his loneliness. It was part of the whole package that brought about a temporary collapse in this great man.

man. We're told in the Bible that iron sharpens iron. We need one another. We need the stimulation from one another. We need the company of one another.

And it's amazing how often sometimes just coming into Christian company will lift you. Something that people will say, a wee word of encouragement. And so, it's important.

And it's important within the congregation that you don't be alone. That you find, I know that sometimes people struggle because in a larger congregation to find an identity, but even within whatever small circle you can be part of, it is important not to be on your own.

Well, Thomas was on his own. So, when we take this collection of things where Thomas's dark personality, where his world had turned upside down, and being on his own, he wasn't ready to believe the other disciples when they said, we have seen the Lord.

[11 : 08] He didn't believe Mary's testimony when she said, I have seen the Lord. He didn't believe the disciples' testimony when they said, we have seen the Lord. In fact, Thomas, he reckoned an extreme way about him, and he says, look, he says, I'll never, I'll tell you what, the only way I will ever believe is if I see, I've got to see Jesus, and I've got to see the nail prints.

In fact, it's more than just see them. I've got to put my finger into the hole. I've got to put my hand into the side. Otherwise, I will never believe, and the word that is used here is a very emphatic the negative is so emphatic it says, I will never believe it unless this is what happens.

And you know the wonderful thing about Jesus is that he meets all Thomas' demands. Now, that doesn't mean that he's always going to meet our demands, but on this occasion that's exactly what he did.

And when Jesus, we find that he appears again and Thomas is present, that Jesus says to Thomas, everything that Thomas had asked for, unless I see the hands and the marks of the nails, Jesus says to Thomas, see my hands.

Unless I put my fingers into the mark of the nails, bring your finger, Thomas. Unless I place my hand into his side, Jesus says, put your hand on my side.

[12 : 44] I will never believe, said Thomas. Do not disbelieve, but believe, said Jesus. Isn't that wonderful? That Jesus just meets Thomas with every single thing that Thomas asked for.

And as Thomas looks at Jesus, he kind of melts. And he just says, my Lord and my God.

And you know, it's quite amazing. Here is this man who up until now has been fulfilled with doubts. People call him doubting Thomas. It was more than doubts. It's more than, more than a kind of a doubt, an uncertainty.

Thomas, as we said, he was just not believing it. In a moment, the sight of Jesus changes everything. And you know what? The same is true today. Is there anybody in here today who is still an unbeliever, somebody who believes the gospel but has never come to a personal faith in Jesus Christ, who struggles with it all?

You know this if you are given just by faith a glimpse of Jesus. It'll change everything. Everything in a moment. All the resistance, all the doubts, all the fears, all the uncertainties, everything, will melt away.

[14 : 07] And you ask the Lord to open your eyes that you will see. If you have never seen him, ask that, Lord, open my eyes that I may see. The Lord won't turn away that request.

If you are genuinely, sincerely meaning that, you ask him and he will hear, he does hear, and he will answer. And so when Thomas sees Jesus and he says, my Lord and my God, as we say, this is one of the great, the great statements in the New Testament regarding the deity of Christ.

And Thomas, in that statement, is saying, Lord, you are the fulfillment of everything. You are my everything. I think, I think there's various things in Thomas' statement.

I think there's a sense of repentance. You can almost say, oh, my Lord and my God, how could I have doubted you?

Lord, I am so sorry to have in any way doubted you. There is a great confession that is necessary to faith. We are to believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[15 : 18] I think there's also a declaration of humility in Thomas because at this moment he is seeing Jesus Christ as Lord and God. He is now ready just to bow and to submit before all his authority.

Just in that moment he is, as it were, overwhelmed. And there are times that we're like Thomas. I'm sure many of you in here have said the same thing, my Lord and my God.

See, when you first came to faith, when you first came to that place where you knew that Jesus Christ was your Savior, can you remember, oh, my Lord and my God, you are the one I've wanted. There's a sense of satisfaction, a sense of fulfillment. You've said that at times maybe when you've been delivered from something, where God has helped you, where God has opened a door, where God has saved you from something, where you've been in difficulties and the Lord has helped you. And it's a sense of sheer thankfulness, oh, my Lord and my God. Times maybe even just reading his word, studying.

[16:38] Time of meditation, reflection. The Lord draws close to you and you're aware of his presence, of his power.

You say, my Lord, my God. You know, sometimes, sometimes that is a complete prayer in itself. Sometimes we think of prayer as being a multitude of words.

Sometimes it's no more than the expression of a few words. And when Thomas said that, that was one of the great, the great prayers.

Because it is a declaration of a heart full of love for Jesus. My Lord and my God. Lordship, of course, speaks of ownership.

And when Jesus is our Lord, we are saying that we submit under his rule and his authority. And that is one of the hardest things for us to do. because we always want to keep a wee bit for ourselves.

[17:39] Isn't that true? Lord, you can have all my heart apart from. I always want little bits where we still want to be in control.

It's part of our nature, control. It's part of what causes so many fights and wars in this world is control. It's about power, about the need to be in control.

Some people feel there's need to be in control of far more than themselves. That's the basis of so much in the way of conflict. You'll find it in many different workplaces.

It's all about control. And that's part of the legacy of the fall. We want to be in control. And even as Christians, while we've submitted to Christ, we still want to keep little bits of shells where we want to be in control.

and the Lord has to chip away, breaking away because the Lord is saying to us, I need total control of your life. Well, when Thomas is saying this, he's saying, my Lord.

[18:48] Yes, you are my Lord completely. And my God, the one I adore, the one I worship, the one I completely believe in.

And then Jesus, he says to Thomas, and some people have said this is Jesus' final beatitude. He says to, blessed are those whom who have not seen and yet believed.

Yes, Thomas, you believe because you saw. But the real blessing is going to be upon those who have not seen and yet believe. And that's us all down through the history of the church, right throughout the New Testament age, those who have never seen the actual physical Jesus.

But we have believed. We have seen with the eye of faith. We have believed. We have seen sufficient of him. You might be here today and you're saying, you know, I'm so aware of God the Father, but I can't see Jesus.

I want to see Jesus. But you know, I believe that we're often brought to different stages when we're maybe made more aware of one passion.

[20:00] There are three passions in the Godhead. Maybe some here today are far more aware of God the Father in their life. Others more aware of God the Son. Maybe others even more aware of God the Spirit.

But we go through different places because all Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all involved within our salvation. It is the work of salvation involved, just as the work of creation involved Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So the work of salvation involves the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All we need to see is enough of Jesus to believe in him.

And that's what Thomas is saying, what Jesus is saying to Thomas. Blessed are those whom having not seen yet believe. God's love. And it's been said here that John really has gone full circle in his writing.

Because as he began the letter, that's where we read in John chapter 1. Remember how John begins it. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God.

[21 : 10] And the Word was God. And here at the very end we have a similar declaration that the Word, Jesus Christ, is God.

And it comes from the doubting, the unbelieving disciple. And then in the closing remarks of this chapter we find that John highlights, and he says here, now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book.

But John shows us that there is a specific reason in his writing this book. Of course, he is spirit-led and spirit-breathed in it. But these are written. Why? 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.

You know, quite often people will say to you, maybe people who are becoming interested in the Christian faith, or people who really don't know anything about the Christian faith, and they'll say, what should I read?

And sometimes we don't know what to say. Well, I would always say read the Gospel of John. Of course, the whole Bible is set out for us in order that we will come to know God.

[22 : 24] But John specifically highlights at the end here that he has written, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Now, in many ways, we've worked our way through John's Gospel. It's different to the other Gospels, because there's a lot more teaching. A lot of the other Gospels are highlighting so much of many of the miracles and the life of Jesus and the things that he did, whereas John is focusing more on Jesus' meeting with individuals and Jesus' lengthy teachings.

But it is specifically a book that's about faith. Twofold. First of all, that people will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

And it's through the Word, through the reading of the Word and through the preaching of the Word. But it's also, I believe, that faith will be developed and faith will grow and faith will increase.

And that's why it's so important that we're in the Word, in the Word, because this is where we will be nurtured and developed and where we will grow. where our faith will grow.

[23 : 38] And so that's what John is saying here. These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

And then into chapter 21, just at the very beginning, it says there, after this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias.

Now, Jesus had given a message from the tomb, and the message was for the disciples to go to Galilee, and he would see them there. He said, I will go before you and see you in Galilee.

So, we find there's an obedience on the part of the disciples. Of course, the week of unleavened bread, which had followed in the Passover, all that had finished. They had been up in Jerusalem, and that had been the most extraordinary, eventful, horrendous in their experience, a few days, and yet it had finished with a great sense of triumph and victory.

Now they have gone back, back home, back to Galilee. The bulk of the disciples were from Galilee. And so we find this particular scene, which we will follow on next time, we find by the Sea of Tiberias or the Sea of Galilee.

[25 : 01] And this stretch of water is probably the best-known stretch of water in the whole Bible. There are, of course, stretches of water like the Jordan and the Red Sea and so on that have their place, but the Sea of Galilee is the scene of so much of Jesus' activity.

This is the sea that he walked on. This is the sea that he enabled Peter to walk on. This is the sea that he calmed when there was that raging storm and the disciples thought the boat was going to go down.

This was the sea where he told the disciples to go and catch that huge catch of fish. This was the sea where he told Peter to go and get a fish and in that fish he would find money to go and pay the tribute with.

This was the sea that he, remember, they pushed a boat out and he sat in the boat and he taught the crowds who were on the shore. For instance, he taught the parable of the sower. from the sea of Galilee. Around the shores of the sea of Galilee. That's where he fed the five, remember, with the five loaves and the two fish where he fed the thousands.

[26 : 09] And on the other side of the shore, where he cast out on the other side, cast out legion. So the sea of Galilee is one of the most significant stretches of water that we find in the Bible.

people. And it's also interesting that things have gone full circle because it's here that Jesus had called the first of his disciples.

Remember, he had found them mending nets, they were fishermen. Peter, James, John, Andrew, they were all fishermen. And he told them to leave their nets and to come and to follow him. He said, in fact, I'm going to make, yes, you're fishermen, but I'm going to give you a new form of fishing, fishing men. You're going to become fishers of men. So you see, it's gone full circle. Here they are, they're back, as it were, at the very beginning. And the disciples, although Jesus had told them that just as the Father had sent him, so he was going to send them, they hadn't grasped just what that involved.

[27 : 17] And so, as Jesus is going to meet with them, he's beginning now to get them ready to go out. They didn't realize that they just had three years of college with Jesus.

What teaching they had. They probably weren't aware of the amazing privilege until afterwards. And they would reflect upon these amazing three years that they'd spent with Jesus.

But they were just about, to be empowered to go out, as you'll see in the book of Acts, of the amazing spread of the gospel. But it just tells us, and with this we'll close, he revealed himself in this way.

And we'll go on to see that next time. The important thing is that Jesus revealed himself. I have to ask you this question, have you seen the risen Jesus?

Have you come by, as we said, just a sufficient sight of him to be able to say, like Thomas said, my Lord and my God?

[28 : 33] If you have, you have a story to tell. Every Christian has a story to tell. you may say to Israel, all my story is not very interesting.

Yes, it is. If you've been saved by grace, you have the most interesting story in the whole world. A miracle has taken place in your heart.

You have been taken from darkness and you've been brought into light. If you can remember in your life where you couldn't really see spiritually, but now you're seeing.

And sometimes it takes time. some people it's dramatic. Ian Morrison, who is a good friend of my own, who will be here next weekend, I don't know anybody who had a more dramatic conversion than him.

I'm not going to say, but he walked into a church reluctantly against his will and came out full of the Lord. That's how it happens with some people. For other people, it's like it's a slow, slow progression.

[29 : 39] it's like the dawning of the day. And you know the one thing about the dawn of the day, you cannot exactly say when the light is full. There's a gradual, you're beginning to see things a little more clearly, a little more clearly.

And for some people it's like that. And people will say, when were you converted? Well, I can't really tell you. But what I can tell you is this, I was once blind, but now I see.

That's the important thing. And I would ask you today, if you don't know Jesus, ask him into your heart now. Let us pray. Gracious God, we give thanks again for your word, and we pray that we will know your presence and your power, that you won't leave us, but you won't, because you promised that you won't.

And we give thanks, oh Lord, for that, but may we know, may we be aware of your presence, forgive us, Lord, our sin, because so often as Christians, we're not walking maybe the way we should, we're not thinking the way we should, we're not speaking the way we should, and so we pray, Lord, to forgive us all our sin, but we give thanks that with you there is plenteous redemption. We pray, oh Lord, to be with us and grant us your grace in everything. Open our eyes to see and take away our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 126 from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 126.

[31 : 21] And the tune is Denfield, Psalm 126. And the tune is Denfield. page 419.

When Zion's bondage God turned back as men had dreamed were we, then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody. They among the heathens said, The Lord great things for them hath wrought.

The Lord hath done great things for us whence joy to us is brought. As streams of water in the south, our bondage Lord recall, who sow in tears a reaping time of joy, and joy they shall.

That man who bearing precious seed and going forth doth mourn, he doubtless bringing back his sheaves rejoicing shall return. Psalm 126, the tune is Denfield, 419.

When Zion's bondage God turned back as men that dreamed were we, then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody.

[32 : 44] They among the heathens said the Lord, great things for them hath wrought.

The Lord hath done great things for us whence joy to us is brought.

God, as streams of water in the south our bondage Lord recall, whose soul in tears a reaping time of joy and joy they shall.

That man who bearing precious seed in going forth doth mourn, he doubtless bringing back his sheaves rejoicing shall return.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you no one forevermore. Amen.