

Christs Body

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a few moments to that chapter that we read together, John chapter 20, where Jesus appeared, the risen Lord Jesus, having risen after his death three days ago and his burial three days ago, he rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples on a number of occasions, and this was one of them in verse 19.

And Thomas, of course, on that occasion was not there. We don't know exactly why he wasn't there, but he wasn't there. And in 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.

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although 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 and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe. Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

[1 : 37] I want us to think about this passage this evening just from three different perspectives. I want us to focus upon the body of Christ.

Three things about the body of Christ in this passage. First of all, it is a body which is crucified or was crucified.

Then secondly, it is a body that is risen from the dead. It's a body that is raised. And thirdly, I want us to look at his body from a different perspective.

And that is the body which was to be left on the earth. The body that was to be left on the earth. Three perspectives then on the body of Jesus, the body crucified, the body raised, and the body that is to be left on the earth.

Just so that we can focus our minds upon that by way of preparation for the Lord's Supper tomorrow. First of all, his body on this occasion was a body crucified.

[2 : 44] He showed them in that upper room, in that room where the disciples were meeting for fear of the Jews. With their doors locked, Jesus came and he showed them his hands and his side.

What does this mean? What's the significance of his showing them his hands and his side? Well, it means, first of all, that it was him. It truly was him.

It was enormously important for the disciples as they tried to come to terms with the reality of his actual resurrection from the dead. He had prophesied, he had promised them before he was arrested and killed, he had promised them that this is exactly what would happen.

But I suppose that promise was so incredible and they were so incredulous about that promise, they never gave that much attention to it.

When it happened, they found great difficulty in coming to terms with its reality. And so, Jesus showed himself to his disciples to give absolute certainty as to not just that this was a person who looked like him, but that it was truly him.

[3 : 58] And it's absolutely, it's important for our faith also that we know faith is not just directed directed in some kind of black box. There's no such thing as what people call sometimes blind faith.

Faith is faith that is directed in a reality. And therefore, we believe tonight in Jesus, but we believe that he truly died, that he truly was the son of God, that he truly was God come in the flesh, that he gave his life as a sacrifice of our sin.

And we truly believe that he historically actually rose from the dead. But you have to have reason to believe that. You have to have good reason to believe that. And here is your good reason. Because here were a group of demoralized, poor, worried, scared disciples who were trying to come to terms with what exactly had happened in Jesus and with Jesus.

And here is the way in which their doubts are all cleared up. And from this little group of believers comes a church which is anointed at the day of Pentecost and which goes out into the world and becomes the most effective, powerful movement in the whole world.

That didn't just happen on the basis of nothing. It happened on the basis of truth and reality. And this is how we know and we can be confident that it was truly him.

[5 : 25] Now, it is possible that these could have been the marks, that the marks in his hands could have been put there by some other means.

In other words, if it just had been one man appearing with marks in his hands, with holes in his hands, it could have, that's all there was, then it could have been an imposter.

But the Bible makes clear that he showed them his hands and his side. You see, it's enormously important to take these little bits that by themselves wouldn't amount to much.

But when you take them all together and all the evidence that's there in front of us, we come with a clear picture of not just someone who had been crucified and who's now standing in front of this group of people, but that it truly was Jesus.

How do I know that? There are many people who were crucified at that time. Crucifixion was quite a common way of putting criminals to death. But it was not common amongst all the marks that were put on the body of someone who was put to death by crucifixion.

[6 : 37] It was not common for him to have a mark in his side. This was quite unique. You remember, of course, when the soldiers discovered that the other criminals who were crucified with Jesus had died, the soldier thrust a spear into the side of Jesus.

And it's not without good reason that Jesus, the now risen Jesus, shows them the marks not only of his crucifixion, but the unique mark, the distinguishing mark that this was truly Jesus of Nazareth, the mark of the spear having been thrust into his side.

No doubt also the disciples would have seen the mark of the thorns on his head. It wasn't every criminal that was tortured in this way before he was crucified.

But this left them in no doubt whatsoever that this was the Lord. And the disciples were glad. It's no wonder we read these words. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

So this was his body that was crucified. But it is also a body that is risen. Whatever I said before was total hypothesis.

[8 : 01] It was simply impossible for anyone to have come down from a Roman cross, having been nailed to a Roman cross. One thing was absolutely certain.

That once a person, once a poor criminal was nailed to a Roman cross, that person, there was only one objective to that.

And there was only one certainty that that person was going to die. No one ever came back from the cross. You simply could not come down from the cross.

That's why, of course, that was one of the mockings with which the people taunted Jesus. If you're the son of God, come down from the cross. They knew perfectly well the impossibility of that.

They'd never seen that happening before.

It was simply an impossible feat. And yet here was this man with all the marks of having been crucified. Yet he is alive.

[9 : 00] He's standing in front of the disciples and he's showing the body, which is not just one which has been crucified, but it is a body that is risen.

But there are some very interesting reflections that we could make on this risen body of Jesus. Coming away now from the evidences, and it's important.

It's important for people to have these evidences in our minds. Because you and I are likely to meet, especially in this day and age, we're likely to meet people who ask us, why are you a Christian? Why are you a Christian and not a Muslim? Why are you a Christian and not a Hindu or a Sikh or any of the other world religions? And why is it that you think that you're right and everyone else is wrong?

Can you answer that question? It's a very important question to answer. And I think the answer is a very simple one. It begins here with the resurrection. Because here you have the uniqueness of the

Christian faith.

[10:01] Here is God in the flesh having come into the world and given his life on the cross, been buried and risen again. How do you know he's risen again? Because you go back to these eyewitnesses, to these several people.

Not just one, not just two, but people who saw. Eyewitnesses who witnessed the living Jesus. They also witnessed him dying. And he was buried for three days.

He lay in the grave. Now, those same people, and by the way, they found it just as difficult to believe as anyone would have.

It's not just the 20th or 21st century is full of skeptics. These men and women would have been just as skeptical of anyone rising from them. It was just as impossible to rise from the dead in those days as it is now with all our knowledge and technology and everything that we have.

And so for them, it was difficult for them to get their heads around that this actually was happening. This was a miracle, the miracle that crowned every other miracle that Jesus did.

[11:06] But it's so crucial because it forms the basis of our faith. What makes us Christians tonight? What makes us believers? It's this, that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, rose, actually rose from the dead.

And we believe that because we have witnesses. And it's not without any reason that he appeared before them so that they would write these things down, so that they would give their own stamp of authenticity to it.

And these were real men and women. Men and women who you had to convince just the same way as we would be. And yet here were men and women who came to a full understanding and an absolute certainty of what it was that they believed.

So much so that they were prepared to go out and to preach about him and to die if necessary for him. They were so certain of what they knew that they were prepared to go out and die for the sake of the Lord, who they knew was risen from the dead.

That's why it's important to look at, to examine the evidence in a world that wants to know, in a world that needs to know the gospel, in a world that so hungers after the reality that only God can give in his son, Jesus Christ.

[12:30] Now, having seen that, let's look at the theological implications of this body, this body of Jesus that was dead, that had come in the flesh, Jesus having come in the flesh, but now was risen.

It was risen. Was it the same body in which he died? Was it exactly the same body in which he died? For example, was he still able to feel pain?

Was that body, the body with which he rose from the dead, able to die again? Could it possibly be that he could die a second time? And if not, what was the difference then between the body that he had before the cross and the body that he had after the cross?

You see, once you begin to open this up, some very interesting questions arise and there are some of these questions that you can't answer, but nevertheless, it's interesting to try and understand because even if we don't come to a conclusion on some of these questions, the questions themselves are the utmost important because they revolve around the saviour, the saviour whose death we are going to be remembering tomorrow.

So I would imagine that people who love him as we do because he first loved us will want to know as much as we possibly can about the kind of nature that he had.

[13:53] There's no use saying, well, oh, we'll never understand any of these things, so don't even bother trying. The Bible is there for our partial understanding. I know that we will never understand all of it, yet there are so...

God has given us a brain, and the brain that he's given us, he wants us to use it to try and to understand as much as we possibly can in the light of his word, the Bible.

And all of these questions come to the surface. For example, why is it that Jesus simply appears before the disciples? The doors are locked. Presumably the windows are closed as well.

So he obviously didn't come through the doors. How is it? How can you explain his appearance?

Well, you can say that Jesus was able to do anything at all. There was nothing impossible with God. And yet there's something about this that is different from what he would have done before the cross, isn't there?

There's a difference, isn't there? They recognized him as the same person as they knew for three years before he gave his life. They knew who it was. They recognized him as the Lord.

[15:01] They saw the Lord. On another occasion, Peter exclaimed, It's the Lord. It is the Lord. And he exclaimed in such joy. So they recognized him for who he was.

And yet, even being able to reckon there was something different about his risen body that was not there at first.

And we could call it this. We could call it with the theologians that we could say that the body that he had at first, with which he was born, in which he was able to feel pain and hunger and tiredness, and the body with which he died, was the body of what we call his humiliation.

But when he was the blood of what he was born, the body of what we call his humiliation. But when he rose triumphant from being dead, you can never say that that body was going to die again. We know that he never died again. That would have been absurd. And so we can say that this body with which he rose from the dead was a glorified body, a resurrected body.

[16:19] Because it was in that body that he rose and ascended to be with the Father 40 days after he rose from the dead. In fact, if you really want to go deeply into it, I think it's fascinating to ask these questions.

And it's also fascinating to read those who have done a lot more thinking than I have, and that presumably you have as well. It's fascinating to read people who really try to grapple with this, like the scholar Ari Finlayson, if you've ever read any of his works.

Marvellous, marvellous works. This is what he thought. Jesus' humanity, you'll forgive me for going just a wee bit deep tonight. Jesus' humanity, he said, occupied three phases.

Think about this. First of all, a phase of humiliation. Then, a phase of resurrection. That's what we're talking about here tonight. Phase of resurrection.

But then he believed also there was a third phase. Finally, he said, a phase of glorification. That's him as he is today in heaven.

[17:28] Now, this is what he said. During the 40 days, he was, this is the 40 days between the resurrection and the ascension. What we're talking about here. He was on the borderland of two worlds.

But now in his ascension, today, his body was passing into the glorification phase. And this body of glorification was as different from his resurrection body as his resurrection body was different from his body of humiliation.

The ties between him and earth were being dissolved, slowly evaporating. Now, I don't know to the extent to which you might agree or disagree with Finlayson on that.

But isn't it fascinating to ask these questions? How different is the body of Jesus today in heaven? Because he still has a body.

He is in heaven tonight in our nature as God and man. How different is the body he has tonight from the body he had here in this chapter?

[18:34] And how different is the body he had here in this chapter from what it was before the cross? It's interesting, isn't it? I'll leave you to work on all of these questions. They're absolutely fascinating.

But there seems to me to be no doubt about the difference. For one thing, as I said, he seemed to appear before. Here were these few disciples in this locked room.

The doors locked for fear of the Jews. And Jesus appeared. He came and stood among them. How did he come? Some people say, well, he passed through the locked doors.

My question to that is, why did he have to pass through the door? Why couldn't he have passed through the window? Why did he have to choose the door?

I don't believe that he chose the door at all. You know what I believe? I believe he was there all the time. And he simply became visible.

[19:39] His body became visible. On that particular occasion. And you say, well, you proved that. Well, I can't really prove it conclusively. But let's go a wee bit further into this.

Forty days between his resurrection and his ascension. We know that there were forty days. We know also that he appeared before his disciples at certain times, on certain occasions, during those forty days.

But he wasn't with them all the time. Where was he meanwhile? Where was he when he wasn't meeting with his disciples? Was he in some house?

Was he roaming the streets? Did he go back to stay with his mother? Where was he? And how can you explain the fact that he appeared with his disciples and then he seemed to just phase away

again?

It's the same with the road to Emmaus. Remember in Luke chapter 24, the two disciples, as they walked on the road to Emmaus, they met with Jesus, met with them. He accompanied them to the house.

[20 : 43] And then he broke bread with them. And they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. And then he seems to have disappeared. Again, indicating that there was a difference between the body that he had now, now that he's risen, and the body that he had before.

Where, though, did he disappear to? Where did he go? It's an interesting question, isn't it? Where was he? Fascinating.

I believe that he went to be with the Father. That he disappeared to be with the Father. And you're going to say, well, surely that's what happened when he ascended 40 days later.

And they all saw him going to be with the Father. Surely that's what happened then. How can you say that it happened beforehand? Well, let me ask you this. When he was on the cross, he died on the cross three days, three days and three nights, he was in the grave.

The body was dead in the grave. Where did his soul go? Bible tells us. It tells us that he went to be with the Father when he was dead.

[21 : 51] Now, how is it possible to believe that he went to be with his Father for the three days that he was dead? His soul went to be with the Father. And not to believe that as his soul and his body combined in the resurrection couldn't phase in and phase out of an earthly sphere and a heavenly sphere.

And you're going to say, well, because heaven is surely going up. Why? What makes heaven upwards? Why do we always think of heaven as a way up there?

How far away is it? A million miles? Three million miles? Let me tell you this. Heaven is closer than you think it is.

Much, much closer than you think it is. I believe tonight that heaven is a whisker away. That there is only a very, very small and tiny threshold between our existence here and heaven.

And here is Jesus. And he's phasing in and phasing out when it pleases him. Until, until he has made it clear that he has risen from the dead until he has showed himself a sufficient number of times for the disciples to be absolutely strengthened in their faith and for them to be going out with the gospel in full confidence, full of the spirit and his work on earth is done.

[23 : 24] So he finally, once and for all, ascends 40 days later to be once and for all with the father. Now what does that tell us? It tells us there's a very, very important truth in this.

It tells us that if, if I'm right, then Jesus was with the disciples all the time. Whether they saw him or not. And that's the point.

Because the Bible goes on to tell us that whilst it's true to say that Jesus is in heaven at the father's right hand, the Bible also makes it clear that Christ is among his people.

He dwells among his people. That's the image that John saw in Revelation of the glorified, risen Christ standing amongst the lampstands.

The lampstands represented the church on earth and Christ is amongst them. That means that Christ is amongst us as we worship, as we come together, as we meet with him.

[24 : 26] Christ, we don't ever think of Jesus as being a way beyond the blue. But Jesus, when we come to the Lord's table tomorrow, why do we call it the Lord's table?

It's not just because we remember the Lord's death. It's because we believe that the risen Lord himself is present with us.

Not just at the sacrament, but he's present with us every time we come in his name. Every time we give worship to him, we hear his word, we read his word, we have fellowship with him, we have communion with him.

Ordinarily, by hearing his word and by coming to him in praise and thankfulness and prayer, but also, tomorrow, as he's commanded his disciples, to enjoy that particular blessing, a particular blessing, in the word and in the sacrament.

So then, I'm going to leave it there. I'm just, I hope that, I hope that I've covered some interesting questions that hopefully dispel the notion that somehow or other heaven is far away.

[25 : 37] Heaven is not far away at all. Heaven is a blink away. The twinkling of an eye is what it takes for someone to leave this world and be translated directly, immediately, in a moment of time.

And that's why, that's why the catechism tells us that the great hope, the great promise that every believer can lay hold on tonight is that the souls of believers are at their death, made perfect in holiness, do immediately pass into glory.

Phase out of this world straight into glory itself, straight to be with the Lord. There's no distance involved. It's simply a dimension, something that we can't understand. God, but don't let us think about heaven as being far away because the moment you think about heaven as far away, you think of God as far away.

And I think that when we remember that God is near, present, it makes a huge difference to the way we live our lives to remember that we are in the company of the Lord all the time, all the time.

Interesting, isn't it? The body, I want us to, thirdly, because the time is going, I want us to, we've looked at the crucified body, the risen body, but then thirdly, the body that was left on earth.

[26 : 51] What do I mean by that? I mean the body of believers with whom Jesus met. Isn't it interesting that this chapter is about Jesus revealing his body risen from the dead to his body that were to be left on earth?

The Bible makes it absolutely clear that the church, the collection of God's people witnessing and worshipping are the body of Christ.

The body of Christ. And here is that very first New Testament body of Christ. They're meeting. Isn't it interesting? Isn't it fascinating that after all that Jesus did, all the acclaim and the praise and the following and the fascination that he generated throughout the three years of him coming into this world, the miracles that he carried out in this world, to the amazement of everyone, isn't it amazing that having made so evident who he was, the eternal son of God in the flesh, having made abundantly clear that this was none other than God himself, that the fruit of those three years, his death and his resurrection, that the fruit should be just this little bunch, this little group of shaking, weak, timid people, demoralized and saddened, confused, not knowing where to turn, meeting in closed doors for fear of the Jews.

Isn't it amazing that that's the fruit of his three years? Until he stood amongst them. That was where everything changed.

That was where this little, weak, lifeless body of people came to life because they saw the risen Lord Jesus and they met with the risen Lord Jesus.

[28 : 47] That's when the church was empowered. We think, of course, of Pentecost as the day when the church was empowered by the Holy Spirit. We're right to do so. But we mustn't think of this occasion as being of no consequence.

This was when they set eyes upon, they saw, the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Beforehand, they were anything but glad. They were demoralized.

They were shaking in their shoes, didn't know where to turn. Now they were full of confidence, full of joy. But I want us to think in closing that the body that had come to life on this occasion was on this occasion not complete.

one was missing. And we're never allowed to forget that throughout this whole passage.

We're not allowed to forget that Thomas, and in fact, it's almost, you almost get the impression that the Bible's not going to rest until the Thomas problem is solved.

[29 : 55] You might think that, well, the fact that Thomas wasn't with them, well, that's just too bad. As long as the majority of the disciples were there, well, that's what counts. But as far as the Bible is concerned, irrespective of who was there, it makes a particular focus on who wasn't there.

And it may, and it appears that the story is followed. I just wonder, I suppose it's very dangerous to say if, but again, let me, allow me to say the word if.

If Thomas had been there on the first occasion, this chapter wouldn't have been so long because the chapter wouldn't have needed to go on to the second occasion when Jesus met with them.

The second occasion occurred. The great difference was that this time Thomas was there with them. Let me just, let me just say four things about Thomas and about how Jesus appeared to his disciples on this occasion.

Four things that begin with the word although. Four paradoxes. First of all, I want to say this, that although it is possible to get blessing by ourselves, there is a particular revelation amongst God's people.

[31 : 17] God, the Lord chose on this occasion not to reveal himself individually to each disciple. He could have done that if he had wanted to but he chose to reveal himself to the disciples as they were met together in fellowship.

In all their fear and weakness and trembling, that's the place where Jesus chose to reveal himself to his church as a church.

And once again I want us to be reminded of the importance that the Bible places on the church as the collection of God's people meeting together for worship.

The New Testament has a high view of the church. Jesus has a high view of the church. Even if the church is nothing but a group of people, here is where he reveals himself.

So it is not right to say, I don't need the church. I don't need to be amongst them. I can meet with God where I am in my home and I don't need to meet with anyone else.

[32 : 29] Well, it may be logical to say that, it's not biblical to say that, and it's not right to say that. There's nothing in the New Testament that gives us any right to say that.

Thomas was not there, and by not being there, he missed out on seeing Jesus in the flesh. He wasn't in the place where he should have been.

Now, I don't know why he wasn't there, and I think we have to be very careful. We have to be very careful before criticizing poor Thomas. We don't actually know, but the passage does seem to suggest that he should have been there, and the fact that he wasn't there, it left him impoverished.

He should have been there. Second although is this. Although Thomas was not there, the disciples made sure that they told Thomas what they had seen and who they had seen.

This is enormously important. Can you see what the disciples did? They met with Jesus, Thomas wasn't there, first thing they did was they went to find Thomas and they told him, we have seen the Lord.

[33 : 51] That means that they made a conscious, exerted effort to tell him, to witness to him, and to share with him their blessing, in order with a view to him being there the next time and so that he would be included in the blessing that they got so that he would be strengthened as well.

They probably knew that his faith was wavering, that his faith was shaken at this time. Their faith was shaken as well. They were all shaken. It was hard, as I said at the very beginning.

It was difficult for them to come to terms with the fact that Jesus had now risen from the dead. And perhaps Thomas was following his logic and was saying, I have no evidence for any reason.

I don't understand why my friends are meeting in this room. Jesus is dead. He's buried. What's the point? There is no point. Logically, there wouldn't have been.

If there is no resurrection from the dead, Paul says, your faith is in vain. we are of all men most miserable.

[35 : 02] That's the logical conclusion that there is no resurrection. See, on the resurrection hangs everything. So maybe Thomas was just following his own logic and maybe the disciples didn't really know why they were meeting in the first place.

Nevertheless, they were there. Perhaps their faith was just so slender. They just hung on a thread. You know it's like that sometimes, isn't it? our faith gets so weak.

Our faith is so shaken. It's almost gone. There are times when it's almost not there. And yet they were there. And it was when they were there that they saw the Lord.

And maybe there are some of us tonight, and that's the way we feel. Maybe we feel tonight, I shouldn't be here. And I shouldn't be at the Lord's table tomorrow because of the way how far away I feel from the Lord.

Because of how cold I feel towards him. Because things have changed in my life. My thinking has changed and the degree to which I feel committed to the Lord has changed.

[36 : 09] I don't know what has happened to him and it hasn't made me a stronger Christian and I know that I'm all the more impoverished for it and I wish I could get back to where I was. I don't think I'll come tomorrow.

Make sure you don't follow that through. You be here tomorrow even when your faith hangs by a thread because you're in the right place.

It is not what we are towards the Lord. It's not what we do for him. It's what he has done for us. And as we come together tomorrow, who knows how and in what way the Lord will reveal himself to you in a way that will not happen if you're not there.

Who knows? Even tonight as we gather together in fellowship just as the disciples were. there. And you know, I find this so amazing and so wonderful that the other brothers that they went out after Thomas.

We have a responsibility towards our shaken brothers and sisters. You know, I suppose that in any gathering of this size of believers, there are some who feel confident and rejoicing in the Lord and strong in their faith.

[37 : 28] Don't ever trust in that strength. Don't ever rely on that strength. You make sure that you only rely on the Lord. who knows that in the passage of time, that very faith in which you are so confident may waver.

And you too may start to shake and start to topple like many as a godly person has. But the church has a responsibility to go after our brothers and sisters when we know that things are struggling and when they're struggling and to go and say, we've seen the Lord.

Come and be with us. And that was enough for Thomas to be with them the next time. Perhaps he still didn't know. But at least it was at least a wee light. Even when he said to him, unless I put my nails, unless I put my hands in the mark of his nails and place my finger in the mark of the nails and place my hand in his side, I will never believe.

Even on that basis he still came. Because there was that slender thread of hope and light for him. The third thing is this, that when he was with them, the next time, although Jesus spoke to everyone in the room, he spoke especially to Thomas.

In other words, it was when Thomas was with the rest that Jesus specifically spoke to him. Isn't it interesting that Jesus could have met with Thomas privately, but he didn't?

[38 : 58] the Lord used the disciples to encourage Thomas back into the fold, and once he was back in the fold, it was then and in that context that the Lord appeared to the whole body of believers and he spoke to them all.

But he had a special word for Thomas. And I hope that tomorrow and tonight, that whilst the Lord speaks to all of his people in his word, there's that sense in which he has a special word for you, in which you are made to know that the Lord has you in his sights and has his hand upon you and drawing you personally in the cords of his extraordinary love closer and closer to himself.

last, although although Thomas was blessed in seeing Jesus, there is a special blessing in believing without seeing.

That's what Jesus says. Blessed are those who have not yet seen, who have not seen and yet have believed.

believed. That's where we are tonight. We haven't seen the Lord. None of us have seen the risen Lord in the flesh and yet we know he's alive. We know he is in heaven at the Father's right hand.

[40 : 34] We've come to trust in him tonight, haven't we? We've come to trust in him and it's as real as if he were here standing in front of us this evening. These are the facts.

To us, they're facts because faith is the substance of what we hope for, the evidence of what is not seen. And it is in that faith, the faith of the Lord has placed in our hearts that we know, I know that my Redeemer lives.

I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. I hope you'll be in the right place tomorrow.

I hope you'll be amongst the Lord's people. I hope that you'll be where God's people are, hearing his word, rejoicing in the risen Lord Jesus who gave his life for us.

Even if you feel like Thomas, unless I put the name of you, you might feel just as he did, in which your faith is slender and shaken and we ask that God will strengthen us and that he will touch us and empower us for his own purposes.

[41 : 59] I've taken too long. I'm going to read a poem that was written by the theologian Don Carson, a poem that I came across in a book about Thomas just because I think it just encapsulates everything that this chapter teaches us about the risen Jesus.

Here's what he says. He was a skeptic. Not for him that easy faith that swaps the truth for sentimental sigh. Unless he saw the nail marks in his hands himself and touched his side, he'd not believe the lie.

Then Jesus came. Although the doors were shut and locked, repent of doubt and reach into my side. Trace out the wounds that nails left in my broken hands and understand that I who speaks to you once died.

And then he goes on to say this. Long years have passed and still we face the hour of death which steals our loved ones leaving us undone and still confronts us, beckoning with icy breath, the final terror when life's course is run.

But this I know. The Savior passed this way before, his body clothed in immortality, the sting's been drawn, the power of sin has been destroyed.

[43 : 31] We sing, death has been swallowed up in victory. this is the Lord, the Lord crucified, the Lord risen, the Lord appearing to his body, to his people on earth.

And we pray that we will meet with him tomorrow as we have met with him in his word this evening and that we will see once again the marvelous truth of what it is to worship and to live for the living Lord Jesus.

Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, we want to give thanks to you this evening for the substance of our faith. And we want to give thanks, O Lord, that Jesus has given himself for us. We want to be amongst those who love the Lord and who collectively worship his holy name and who remember what he has done for us. Forgive us, we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen. Amen.