

Easter I

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Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[0:00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. What does it take to believe when we're gripped by doubt?

All of us wrestle with doubt at times, but doubt isn't the opposite of faith. It can be the path to a deeper faith.

In our gospel text this morning, Thomas doubted, and Jesus met him in his doubt. And Thomas ended up with one of the strongest confessions of faith in the entire gospel.

On the evening of the first day of the week, the disciples gathered together behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. Jesus had been crucified by the authorities, and the disciples knew that they might be next.

Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. Now, this wasn't a greeting or a simple wish for peace. This was Jesus bringing peace.

[1:18] Verse 20 says, When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. He showed them the nail marks and the spear wound. And this was the same Jesus who had died, now standing before them very much alive.

The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. But Thomas wasn't there. Verse 24 tells us, Now Thomas called the twin. One of the twelve was not with them when Jesus came.

When the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord. Thomas wouldn't believe it. Thomas said, Unless I see his hands, the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Thomas laid down specific conditions in the strongest possible way and said, Unless I have proof, I certainly will not believe.

Now, maybe Thomas was more traumatized than stubborn. He was preoccupied with the wounds, for sure.

[2:33] But perhaps he was so shocked by the crucifixion that he couldn't imagine its consequences being undone. The thought of resurrection never occurred to him.

Now a week passed, and after eight days his disciples were again inside, and this time Thomas with them.

The doors were shut, but Jesus appeared and stood in the midst of them, saying, Peace be to you. Without anyone telling him what Thomas had said, Jesus already knew.

Verse 27 says, Then he said to Thomas, Reach your finger here, and look at my hands. And reach your hand here, and put it into my side.

Do not be unbelieving, but believing. Jesus didn't rebuke Thomas for his doubt. He offered exactly what Thomas had demanded.

[3:40] Do not be unbelieving, but believing. But Thomas didn't need to touch our Lord's wounds. The sight of Jesus was enough.

And Thomas answered and said to him, My Lord and my God. This is the climax of John's gospel. Thomas saw the risen Jesus and understood what it meant.

Only God could conquer death. John began his gospel declaring, The word was God. Now Thomas confesses that same truth.

Then Jesus said something meant not just for Thomas, but for all who would come after. Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Faith in the risen Christ does not require physical proof.

[4:51] Blessed are those who believe without seeing. Yet Christ graciously meets doubters where they are. Jesus didn't condemn Thomas for needing proof.

He stated the fact. You have believed because you have seen me. Then he pronounced a blessing on those who would believe without seeing.

We are those people. Everyone who has believed in Jesus from that day until now has done so without seeing him.

We weren't there in the locked room. But we have the apostolic witness recording in scripture and proclaimed by the church.

That's the blessing Jesus pronounced. We believe the resurrection because the apostles testified to what they saw. Now they weren't naive people.

[5:52] Thomas makes that very clear. Only overwhelming evidence convinced them. But Jesus meets Thomas where he is.

Thomas demanded proof and Jesus gave it to him. Christ still meets us where we are. We have the apostolic testimony in scripture.

We have the church's witness. We have the promise that where two or three are gathered together in his name. He is there. Jesus asks us to trust the testimony of those who saw him.

And gave their lives proclaiming that truth. Now Christ doesn't demand that we manufacture faith out of nothing.

If we struggle with doubt, he doesn't turn away. But he also calls us forward. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.

[6:59] Thomas had to make a choice. When he responded, his faith leaked beyond. He confessed Jesus as Lord and God.

This is the faith that Jesus calls us to. And such faith is blessed. We who believe without seeing are the ones for whom this blessing was spoken.

We haven't seen the nail marks. But we have received the testimony. We believe in the risen Christ. We confess him as our Lord and our God.

And by believing, we have life in his name. The life that death could not hold. The life that is ours now and forever.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.