

# Thomas the doubter

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn with me, if you will, to the book of John's Gospel. We're going to follow on from last week, and we'll read verses 5 through to 7.

John chapter 14, verses 5 to 7. Let's then read together and hear God's Word.

Thomas said to him, Lord, we know not whither you're going, and how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also. And from henceforth you know him and have seen him.

And God will bless us, that reading of his Word. Let's just pray together. Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.

[ 1 : 23 ] To reach out and touch him, and say that we love him. Open our ears, Lord. Help us to listen. Oh, open our eyes, Lord.

And let us see Jesus. Amen. I want to ask you a question. Have you ever lost your way? Maybe on the road, in a supermarket, all those aisles, especially when they change, where the food's going to be put, you think it's over there, and it's not.

It's somewhere else. Well, there's a book that's called, *Why Men Don't Listen, and Women Can't Read Maps*.

Of course, it's down to the person giving directions. If you can't give proper directions, then nobody will follow you. Is that right? So, let me just tell you a story.

Recently, when I'm going over to Fife, I set my sat nav, going over Queensferry crossing, my tom-tom, a third of the way over, told me to turn right.

[ 2 : 57 ] And one minute later, it told me to turn right again. And I said, you can't be serious. And I wonder if there are times you understand why I don't listen.

if people are going to give me the wrong instructions. Our sat nav has to be up to date. Navigation system has to be up to date.

Abraham Lincoln once said, better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.

Of course, we can't, I can't, and if we speak to a navigation system or listen attentively, especially if it hasn't been updated. But let me tell you something.

The Bible is the most up-to-date navigation system God has given to mankind. It doesn't need to be updated. All it tells mankind from beginning to end, from what was written to now.

[ 4 : 14 ] This is God's way. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. And in a sense, when Thomas asked that question, how can we know the way?

Jesus, I think, is saying to him, Thomas, stop worrying. We often speak about Thomas as being a doubter, the inquisitor, never making his mind up individual.

However, Thomas was more than a sculling skeptic, a son skeptic, or doubter. For example, when Jesus declared his intention of going to Bethany, saying quite plainly to his disciples that Lazarus is dead, it was Thomas who spoke up by saying, let us go that we may die with him.

And later, when Jesus, in his final address to the disciples, you know the place where I'm going, it was Thomas who responded by saying, Lord, we don't know where you're going and how can we know the way.

And again, when Thomas is told by the disciples that Jesus is alive, he made this remarkable statement, unless I see the nail marks in his hands, I put my finger where the nails were on his side, I will not believe.

[ 5 : 59 ] He was indignant. However, we know that when he returned the following week to the upper room, he didn't need to touch.

He simply said, my Lord and my God. What an amazing statement. Had the crucifixion demolished his faith, quite possibly, but it certainly had done something to it.

But it didn't take long for his faith to be restored. When he returned and saw the Savior beckoning him to touch his hand and his side, sight for Thomas was enough.

and he exclaimed, my Lord and my God. What joy there must have been in that room, that evening. For the other disciples, who thought Thomas wasn't going to come back to them, for Thomas himself, more importantly, for the Lord Jesus Christ, as he heard Thomas, say, my Lord and my God, I've seen, I know.

[ 7 : 34 ] Some people in this congregation have been diagnosed with having cataract problems. I have two. And I've got to go for an assessment to see what they can do about it.

physically speaking, untreated cataracts can lead to vision impairment or even loss of sight.

And in a spiritual sense, the enemy can quite easily distract us and take our attention off God's word, take us away from thinking about Jesus and his love for us, his salvation, his forgiveness, the cross.

And we can become spiritually blind when we take our eyes off Christ. We sometimes are caused to look at the wrong things or say the wrong things, and the enemy tells us, don't worry, there's no harm.

but what Thomas was really saying that day was this, help me to get into perspective what I really want to believe deep down within myself.

[ 9 : 00 ] And sometimes we have that in our own lives, of that crisis of faith. faith. We need God to reconfigure in our lives, his love, his person, his spirit.

And this man, Thomas, was very brave. Yes, let's go with him. And sometimes that can be our situation too, when we lose our faith.

But like Thomas, God can pick us up, can renew us, and remould us for his use and for his glory. Someone once said, I'm sorry for a man who has lost his money. I'm more sorry for a man who has lost his health, but my heart aches for the man who has lost his faith.

Let me encourage you this morning that if you know anybody who has lost his faith or strung them with faith, encourage them, as Thomas was encouraged, to see there isn't Lord from Scripture.

[ 10 : 27 ] Because God can restore that faith that he did for Thomas. And when our faith is restored, we have a better sight of the Saviour.

However, the Apostle Paul, you remember, wrote to the church at Corinth, and he said this, eye has seen, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him.

And there on in his letter to Corinthians, eyes, but now we see but a dim reflection, eyes in a mirror, then shall we see face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. It's very reassuring to us, I think, that Jesus didn't disown them for denying, disbelieving, or fleeing when the situation got tough.

It would be no good if they had remained with those actions ringing in their ears. The disciples had to be united, bound together, of one accord, in order to be effective.

[ 11 : 50 ] In their testimony, those disciples had to come together, and it took Thomas in a sense, not just the other disciples, but Thomas, who when he said, I don't believe unless I see, unless I touch, come and touch, said Jesus, my Lord, my God.

The gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all testify that Thomas was indeed one of the men whom Jesus called to be his disciples, intends both in doubt and belief, eventually being loyal and honest.

Yes, Thomas abandoned Jesus at his arrest. he refused to believe the other disciples, claims, and demanded proof.

He struggled with a pessimistic outlook. You know, the reassuring thing is this, that Jesus doesn't reject doubts that are honest and directed towards belief.

better to doubt out loud than to disbelieve in silence. We have Thomas mentioned again in Acts chapter 1, with the other disciples, the day of Pentecost.

[ 13 : 31 ] And of course, we have his confession, my Lord and my God. But maybe we're asking ourselves this morning, how can I avoid being a doubting Thomas?

Remember too, that this man was also a man who had great bravery, a great desire to follow, yet that one point in his life, he didn't believe.

Philip Yancey said, I have learned that faith means trusting in advance. what will only make sense in reverse. And that's our handle in understanding God's promises to us.

And when we think about prayer and asking God to just touch our lives and to answer our prayers, whatever those prayers are, one of the good ways in which to do that is to have a prayer journal, to write down the prayer, the answer when it came, and how other things have progressed through that prayer.

Recording requests and thanksgivings answers and results. And you know, we have to say this, that you may have to pray for a long time for some of those prayers to be answered.

[ 15 : 21 ] Then I knew a woman who prayed for about 32 years for a husband's conversion. congregation. He had come to church now and again, but what happened?

This day at church, as the congregation were singing, God touched his life by a line of the hymn, and he asked his pastor to show him the way to Christ.

That's wonderful. 32 years she had been praying, pleading, asking God to respond to her prayer, but God knew what time was best for that to happen.

God blessed him, and blessed the church, and blessed the family. God always keeps his promises and answers, answers prayer.

We just have to wait. The prophet Isaiah says, for the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for his stretched out hand, who can turn it back?

[ 16 : 53 ] Well, the purpose of God, can at time be delayed? What is time to God? We often look for answers of prayer like our coffee, instant, but God sometimes has to test us to see how willing we are for that prayer to be answered, and keep praying.

If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear and heal and bless the land. If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves.

You see, God is saying to us, your first step is always down. And then pray. And then seek my face. Keep at it. Don't give up. Then I will hear and heal and bless your land. And that's a promise given to each and every one of us today.

If we are struggling with prayer, if we have not received an answer to our prayers, God is saying, if my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and notice the words after that, and turn from their wicked ways, we have to make sure that our lives are pure before we come to pray.

[ 18 : 33 ] a clean hands and pure heart. Sometimes that's maybe why God doesn't answer right away, because there's something in our lives that's blocking those prayers reaching him.

The psalmist says, for a thousand years, in your sight, I like a day that has just gone by. Wow. And in order to try and understand our prayer life, we have to understand God's word.

We have to believe in God's word, and let it live in our lives. And even although you may not understand how God works, you know he does work, because as you look back in your life, you see times where many of your prayers have been delayed.

And then all of a sudden, God has answered and blessed you. Jesus and Jesus and his discourse to disciples, not just to Thomas, says this, verse 16, if you love me, do whatever I command, and I'll send you another comforter.

you see, there's a promise there. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

[ 20 : 30 ] No one comes to the Father but by me. Keep believing, and I'll send another comforter, my Holy Spirit. And I think it's true to say that much of the church is devoid of the true empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Do we know the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in our church? I sometimes doubt it. That's not a condemnation.

it's applied to my life as much as anybody else's. I need to let go and let God.

I need to let go of my plans and let God fill me with his plans. I need to listen to his word and obey his word.

That at me, direct me where he wants me to go. Yes, you're a doubter. In a sense, Jesus was saying to him, Thomas, stop doubting and believe.

[ 21 : 56 ] Thomas, the reaction, my Lord and my God. Oh, that we would say that in our daily devotions, in our daily life, in our churches, in our worship, my Lord and my God.

Father, I have doubted. There have been times this week where I've struggled with situations, but I now see you in all your fullness, and I want to say you're my Lord and my God.

Fill me to overflowing. We said that Thomas was brave.

let us go with him that we may die with him. In John chapter 11 verse 16.

Even although the disciples had previously stated, a short while ago, the Jews tried to stone you and yet you want to go back there. How many of us, if we had been in that situation, cast your mind back that you were born in the first century, when all hope had been lost, when all hope had been dashed, when Jesus had been humiliatingly crucified, we'd have a similar response to those disciples, disowning him, disobeying him, doubting him, fleeing from him.

[ 23 : 40 ] Oh, let me just say to you, my friends, that God loves you.

He loves a doubter. He loves me, because sometimes I doubt. But I think it's all true to say that Thomas must have been heartbroken.

when Jesus had died on that cross. And grief can do strange things to us.

But that brokenness of heart that Thomas had, was no more doubted than the rest of the disciples. Without touching that he was alive, my Lord and my God. Thomas was no more doubting than the rest of the disciples.

[ 24 : 55 ] And the only reason he doubted and the others didn't because they had seen the risen Lord. And he became a strong and powerful Christian.

He was a faithful apostle, a loving apostle. I wonder, have you ever doubted? maybe you have not received an answer to your prayer when you expected it, when you wanted it, and God has still been testing you and trying you if your faith's strong enough.

Have we been faithful to him? Maybe we've been hurt by others. But Jesus wants to assure us he comes to us in every situation as a risen Lord.

And he says to us, you're my son, you're my daughter. And when Thomas asked him, how can we know the way?

Jesus responded by saying quite clearly, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[ 26 : 29 ] That song we sang, ladies sang just a minute ago from Isaiah 35, verses 8 to 10, a highway there will be, and the ransomed of the Lord will walk there.

They will enter, Zion with singing. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

This way which Jesus speaks about to the disciples was a simple way where God is more concerned with purity of heart than social distinction.

have we found that way? Are we walking that way? It's a safe way. The psalmist says, for he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways, all your ways.

It's a sing way. A rejoicing church sings well. Well, we sometimes sing that lovely hymn, I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene.

[ 27 : 49 ] Do you like it? You're not too sure? I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene, and wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned unclean.

Oh, how marvelous. Oh, how wonderful that God should so love me with all my sin, my filthiness, and show me a simple way, a safe way, a singing way, and a sublime way, and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.

There'll be no more death, no more pain, no more crying. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. There was a musical that the young people in Portobello Baptist Church sung for the adults, and one of the verses of the song went like this, heaven is a wonderful place, filled with glory and grace.

I'm going to see my saviour's face cause, thank you. that's right, heaven is a wonderful place.

Thomas made a move from being a pessimist to that of an optimist.

You know what a pessimist is? A person who spends a lifetime in a dark room, developing only negatives. but we now have at the end of the gospels the disciples now united together in their faith.

[ 29 : 47 ] Now they could go out and face the pressures and harassments of life without fear and pressures and the harassments they did find.

And I believe that the church may very well have to go through that same situation. with our society today that Christians may very well be persecuted.

But God loves you. God will empower you. God will strengthen you. God will equip you. And God will be with you. For Thomas life was certainly worth living.

Let me close by saying this. that I have a friend and after her blindness was confirmed blind from birth someone in conversation with her mother said to her this the first thing my daughter will see will be Jesus because in heaven all things will become you.

what a promise what a faith the first thing my daughter will see in heaven will be Jesus because all things become you my Lord and my God oh that will be glory for me when by his grace I shall look on his face that will be glory be glory for me may that be true for you this morning in your doubts misunderstandings you're questioning why your prayers have not been answered God will answer your prayers in his time in his way as he desires and like Thomas you'll stand back and say my Lord and my God bless you all father God thank you for the truth of your word that you're always with us you never leave us nor you forsake us and you want us to experience the truth that Thomas experienced that day when we say to you my

[ 32 : 17 ] Lord and my God bless everybody here this morning in all the situations they're going through in life and may they hold on to that promise that you made a way and you'll bless us and you'll do it in your time in your way in your purposes not to be disappointed disappointed or discouraged because your promise has never yet been broken and it never will be from now on further thank you God for your gracious love to us and bless us we pray Amen