

Thomas, from doubt to 'My Lord and my God!'

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[0 : 00] from John chapter 20, John chapter 20, from verse 19 to the end of verse 22, or rather 20 to 29.

Let's end, read together, and hear God's word. On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

After he said this, he showed them his hands and sighed. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

[1 : 36] Now, what Thomas called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord.

But he said to them, Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

A week later, his disciples were in the house again. And Thomas was with them. Though 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. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side.

Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said to him, My Lord and my God.

[2 : 52] Then Jesus told him, Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Amen. And God will add a blessing to his reading and to the hearing of his word. My Lord and my God. The preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was easily the greatest bombshell ever to explode in the ancient world.

As we read the accounts that are contained in the Acts of the Apostles, we can feel the sense of excitement and fervency which spread throughout that early community as they experienced the electrifying presence of the risen Lord.

Here was dynamic witnessing at its best. Indeed, here was a kind of church that everyone wants to be in.

Yes? Oh, thank you. I've just started. I hope you're still following me. Here's a kind of church everyone wants to be in where the dynamism and the effectiveness is felt in the community.

[4 : 37] But the resurrection was only the initial spark to this exploding preaching. There was another incident which we read this morning when Thomas made his confession of faith my Lord and my God.

In this little band of men whom Jesus drew around him one betrayed him who was unfaithful one denied him told lies and other doubted there was disbelief in his mind.

Judas decided on his own fate. But for Peter and Thomas there was a long penetrating look at one followed later on by those words Do you love me?

Do you love me? Peter, do you love me more than these? And for the other the compassionate beckoning to touch the wounds in his hands and his side.

And it's reassuring to know that Jesus didn't disown them but lovingly understood their human weaknesses and sought to draw them back to himself.

[6 : 12] When we think of it Thomas could very well have been disowned by the other disciples when he first believed and when they told him we've seen the Lord and the response was no unless I see myself then I will believe.

They disowned him. But in a sense he was left to stand in his disbelief for a week. And we can speculate as to where he went during that week.

What went through his mind and emotions as he contemplated the words of those other disciples we have seen the Lord.

Have you ever argued with yourself did you win? No. It seemed to me I wonder if in a sense during that week Thomas had that self-argument do I believe or do I not believe?

Has what my brothers said last week is it true? I don't know. But Jesus realized that if those disciples were to be fruitful they must be united.

[8 : 00] And what great excitement must have filled the other disciples lies when Thomas made that confession of faith my Lord and my God.

Some time ago when I was in the Colington Mainz Church we did some house to house visiting myself and there was a student there I think he was from Faith Mission and we went door to door and the high rise flats have been called to Mainz we started to tell people about the Lord and what he meant to us and this man said to me at the door or said to us at the door I don't believe so I said to him well come let me tell you about Thomas he said that's my name and I told him about Thomas and his doubts and how a week later he realised what he had been told was true we were told by Paul to buy up every opportunity and that was a God inspired moment for me and for David he was with me let me tell you about Thomas he didn't believe that's my name and he was astounded but hopefully what we said to him would have made an impact in his life as he thought about that as he contemplated those words and as he hopefully later on would make a decision to follow that same Jesus that we had let's think for a moment about Thomas and his confession of faith Thomas was more than a silent skeptic or doubter remember remember that when Jesus declared his intention of going to Bethany and stating plainly to his disciples let's go because

Lazarus is dead it was Thomas who spoke up saying let's go with him and die with him and Jesus in his final address to the disciples in John chapter 14 where I go you know and the way you know it was Thomas again who seemed to be the spokesperson by replying Lord we don't know where you're going and so we get a picture of Thomas of having real faith and true grace but like many Christians today so full of doubts and fears the crucifixion had undoubtedly demolished his faith and even when told about the Lord we have seen the Lord all he could say in response was unless I see for myself unless I touch unless I have evidence I will not believe your words in a sense what he was saying to the other disciples was this help me to get into perspective what I really do believe deep down inside me and we've all got that in the sense we've got that kind of inner want to believe but help me help my unbelief and we know that Thomas got his wish that week later my Lord and my God someone once said I'm sorry for a man who's lost his money I'm more sorry for a man who's lost his health but my heart aches for the man who's lost his faith but what happened to

[12 : 42] Thomas can happen to all who sink into that position of lost faith for God can easily pick us up remold us reshape us and use us for his kingdom's glory you've maybe heard the statement that's been said often we're in this together and the church is the same we're in this together sharing our faith helping others who may have those doubts those disbeliefs encouraging them to know what there is in the Lord and to help them through their difficulties and traumas we are not put on earth to see through one another but we are put on earth to see one another through and it's tremendous to know that we can day by day know the presence of the living Lord he's always with us we can know it for certainty and for assurance but sometimes when those traumas come and those difficulties come and those situations come into our lives when we get questions that faith seems to disappear a little bit you see it would be no good to have had a disciple in a state of disbelief that disbelief which saturated his life had to be removed the disciples had to be united if they required to be bound together in the same faith and share the same message they all had to be of one persuasion before their witness could be effective how could they possibly have witnessed effectively when one was still uncertain and unsure as to what he had been told and so it is today when God wants to do a mighty work amongst his people the enemy strikes and he strikes in two ways in particular he tries to counter the work that we want to do that God wants us to do and he says to us there's no need to pray about it leave it until tomorrow and you know and

I know that tomorrow never comes and secondly he brings friction and unrest into the church the disciples couldn't pray together because one disbelieved and there would no doubt have been unrest and some friction amongst them why is he not believing what we said because Thomas wouldn't believe prayer is so important in the Christian life and still is but Christ transformed that he

came again to those disciples where Thomas was present and the disciples are united together in their faith now they can go out and face the pressure and the harassments of life without fear for Thomas life was certainly worth living how thrilling to know that Jesus in his infinite wisdom chose a man with this type of temperament to be one of his disciples because in a sense we can all identify with him we've had our little doubts and niggles and where we've argued with ourselves we've lost Thomas said my Lord and my God what implications are there in such a statement what was meant when Thomas said those words my God this is the first time that

Jesus is called God by his disciples and he expresses no disapproval because he knew that the title will rightly belong to him the divine love had shamed had overcome had convinced Thomas that what he had heard the previous week was true the same heart of love that bore those nails those nail wounds were more visible than the gaping side and Jesus reached into the depths of divine tenderness with Thomas to have

God in our lives as our personal saviour makes all the difference God searches for man and he requires those who know him to help him go and do likewise go into all the world by your life by your testimony by your behaviour show something of me to those men and women and young people that you come across be a channel through which my blessings can come to them we can't think of God without first thinking of love there's no separation God doesn't manufacture

[20 : 27] God is love and if we have God in our lives we have God in our love in our lives sometimes it can be a little bit distorted but when we allow him to fully reign and rule there it becomes alive it becomes real it becomes meaningful to those whom we speak with and share with and what we do when we have that love we do all on his behalf we should show by our lives what God is like but what kind of description of God do we give the kind of love which was seen on the cross is the kind of love which should echo and re-echo from our lives day by day we sang those words thou art worthy thou art worthy thou art worthy oh Lord and he is worthy to have our lives filled with his love that we might share it with other people let me read to you one verse from Romans chapter 9 chapter 8 rather verse 9 you however are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the spirit if the spirit of God lives in you and if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ

Christ in me the hope of glory my Lord he is Lord he is Lord he is risen from the dead and he is Lord how do we display that lordship to other people to call Jesus Lord is to say you are my divine master my almighty God and to you I yield myself unreservedly you in fact putting yourself into the part of a slave showing devotion and desire joy and duty there is no need for anyone to feel bored or uninterested in working for Christ because the command to go into all the world surely takes the narrowness out of life indeed no one can feel cramped or restricted with the world as his parish so although you may live in

Edinburgh or wherever you live wherever you go you take Christ with you there's a work waiting to be done in many aspects of our community why did Jesus say those words pray that we will have labors and the fields are white under harvest because he knew that many would fail to realize the real cost of discipleship some time ago them I invited a Muslim a converted Muslim to come and speak at one of the churches Riyaz Muhammad you might have heard of him you might even have heard him speak he was in Queen's Park Baptist Church initially he's now in the chapel down at Rose Street but he talked about when he became a Christian and gave up his Muslim faith his family disowned him and he had to live with that he had to realize what the real cost of discipleship was in giving up everything to follow Christ a lovely man he talked about when he became a doctor he had to study hard to become a doctor he said and then I had to study even harder to become a mister again but he gave up what he believed in because Jesus was so important in his life and he was convinced and realized the purpose of

Christ coming into the world you no doubt have read and heard that old poem about the violin being auctioned who gives one dollar two dollars and so on and suddenly the auctioneer hears someone say to him no just a minute they come out and he takes the violin and he plays it does sit down and plays it abundantly wonderfully well because he had made that violin he knew it and he was able to tune it to the right pitch to make lovely sound coming from it and God made us and under the touch of his hand the real melody of our lives can be brought out when we can say with certainty my

[27 : 28] Lord and my God then we have surrendered unreservedly to him Thomas had to move from being a pessimist to that of an optimist a pessimist is a person who spends his life in a dark room developing only negatives Jesus in the fullness of our supply to live for him and as we keep

receiving we keep on giving there's an old salvation army song that says he giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater he giveth more strength when the labours increase to add his affliction he add his mercy his multiplied trials his multiplied peace he giveth and giveth and giveth and again and no matter what situation you're in

God will give to you his grace and his ability to chew your life and make it sound lovely to those whom you meet Jesus is the fullness of his reply to live for him in John chapter 21 we have three vital qualifications for service a deep love for him a sense of his commitment to us and a devotion a devoted following of him that is what following Christ is loving him accepting his commission and following him unreservedly there had to be unity if their witness was to be effective and so too with us C.T.

Stud an English cricketer said this if Jesus Christ be God and died for me there's no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him when we think of the two on the road to Emmaus they could have done one of two things they could either have invited him to stay or let him walk on by inviting him to stay to hear more to get more of that glimpse of the story he was telling them their lives were enriched touched transformed and that experience can be ours today but is he your Lord and your God one final thought God loves you so much that he will accept you just as you are with all your doubts all your faults all your feelings but he loves you too much to leave you that way and if you let him he will transform and change and fine tune your life that you will sing a new melody to those whom you meet and those whom you share your faith with facing a task unfinished is a hymn that we sang a number of weeks ago the task goes on the witness goes on until that day when christ returns in his glory are you looking forward to it let me ask you the question again are you looking forward to it thank you

I thought you'd gone to sleep that's okay well we're going to sing together a song there's a work for Jesus only you can do God love you you