

John 20:24-29 (NIV)

24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

25 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 it.”

26 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!”

27 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.”

28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

43-20-02-Resurrection from Doubt

Eastertide, doubt, faith, evidence, confession

John 20:24-29

God works with honest doubters who really want to believe.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading)

–[Families wait 9 months for a new baby, but can miss the excitement of the arrival if they step out for some reason and aren't present when the mother delivers.]

Thomas missed out by his absence. We can miss out by *ours*...

–[A mom expecting a girl said, “*I can't believe it!*” when she had a boy instead.

She couldn't believe it till she'd seen and touched the baby.] Thomas also had this kind of opportunity to settle his doubts, when Christ appeared a week after Easter. **HOM.idea.** But we might ask, “*in the first place...*”

I. Why Did Jesus Choose a Doubting Disciple?

- A. God accepts people with questions– **John 14:5**, Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (God likes questions, so He can answer them... He wants us to be convinced of the truth, and to understand and follow it.)
- B. Can a person be both doubtful and loyal at the same time? *Yes!*
 1. [**When Jesus planned to return to Judea**, the disciples said (**John 11:8**), “But Rabbi,... a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” When Jesus insisted, Thomas said (**v.16**), “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”] *He was reluctantly doubtful but loyal!*
 2. [In *The Silver Chair* by C.S.Lewis, marshwiggle Puddleglum, was perpetually doubtful, but loyal. When he and the children were captured by the Queen of Underland, she used magic fire to fog their minds and make them doubt the existence of the world above her dark kingdom. Puddleglum put his foot in her fire to rouse his mind and answer the witch: “Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours *is* the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one... We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can, even if there isn't any Narnia. So... we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say.”] *The doubtful but loyal Puddleglum was a real hero!*
- C. God calls Puddleglums, and His call to Thomas can certainly be an encouragement to those who have doubts in the midst of faith!

TRANS: *Christ's death* seemed to confirm Thomas's doubts. Where was he Easter morning? Probably off somewhere *depressed*, licking his mental wounds. Why did he come back? He was a loyal Puddleglum: "I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan...." Let's look now at...

II. The Anatomy of Doubt...

- A. Doubt is not *unbelief*; it can be *faith under attack* (like *depression*: all's well when rolling down the road, until you hit a *pothole*, a sudden depression in the normal continuity of the road).
- B. Doubt is *faith being shaken* (stormy times can *shake* faith, make it *waver*, *wobble*, even *stumble*, before it regains a steady stance).
- C. Underneath doubt is a desire to believe (it can cause great pain, and that's why God is so concerned about honest doubters....

TRANS: A doubting heart is curable, and God wants to heal it. [**Mark 9** tells of a man whose son the disciples couldn't heal of demon possession, so he brought him to Jesus, saying— **v.22b-24**, "...if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"] Jesus healed that man's son and cured his doubts. **God works with doubters who really want to believe**. God want our doubts to die, so that He can resurrect us into a life of faith...

III. How Can Doubt Die (or We Be Resurrected from Doubt)?

- A. Doubt doesn't always die through the *testimony of friends*:
 1. Remember the reaction of the disciples to the women's report on Easter morning— **Luke 24:11**. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.
 2. Don't fret if friends doubt when you share your faith in Christ... Just as Thomas, they need the 2-steps of **Psalm 34:8**, (1) Taste and see that the LORD is good; (2) blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.
- B. God offers substantial proof to rational minds.
 1. But He has a condition: people must be willing to commit their lives to the truth, not just to give mental assent to it—
 - a. Knowledge is *passive* [like a *sensation* felt by a sensory organ]; true faith is the will's *active response* [like that of a muscular organ].
 - b. Faith depends on trust & knowledge, but a willingness to trust in the truth must actually precede knowing it— **John 7:17** (NLT), [Christ's supernatural promise]— Anyone who wants to do the will of God

will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own.]

2. The *proof* God gives may start small: "taste and see" (A rational mind must be willing to start with even "*a thread of evidence*" [**Kite string** was often used at the start of building great bridges. And a small thread of evidence can soon become thick *bridge cables* stretching across the *River of Doubt* from the rational mind to a strong faith in Christ.]
- C. But sometimes the proof isn't small! What did the risen Savior say to Thomas? "Put your finger here; see my hands."— those Hands...
 1. had healed blind eyes, opened deaf ears, restored lame feet;
 2. had touched the untouchable outcasts with compassion;
 3. had held and blessed the little children mothers brought to Him;
 4. have our names on them ("see..." His scars, for He prophetically told us in Isa 49:16, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands..."

CONCLUSION:

—Thomas never had to touch those scars! In the presence of his risen Lord, his doubt died. He was resurrected from doubt to victorious faith, proclaiming, "My Lord and My God!" His loyal devotion led him to take the Gospel to India, where he died as a martyr for preaching it.

—Someone might say, "*Great for Thomas! But what about my doubts? Will Jesus prove Himself to me?*" **God works with honest doubters who really want to believe**. He gives the *evidence needed* for hearts prepared to obey the truth. Some, like St. Paul, Sadhu Sundar Singh, or Gulshan Esther [who spoke at Eskaton several years ago] were blessed with visionary appearances of Christ. BUT, for most of us He gives a better blessing: *Then Jesus told [Thomas], "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* [**my poem**:

I WASN'T THERE

I wasn't there when, bleeding, Jesus cried, / "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." / But in my heart I've felt His blood applied / To wash my sinful soul and make it new.//
I wasn't there when Jesus rose from death. / I didn't see the risen Christ, my Lord. / But I have felt Him blow His gentle breath / When, on my knees, His blessing I implored.//
I wasn't there when Thomas voiced his doubt / And failed to trust, until the

Lord appeared. / But I was here when troubles thrashed about, / Till Jesus led me past the things I feared.//
I wasn't there when on a mountain tall / He sent disciples forth to preach the News. / But I obeyed the day I heard Him call / For me to follow: I could not refuse.//
I wasn't there when He returned on high / To reign beside His Father on the throne. / But I will hold His hand the day I die / And feel the touch that I have always known. — DLH