

Sermon: Doubting Thomas 16/04/2023

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."

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." John 20:25-29*

About 30 years ago Ilona was reading a book about the Spanish Flu – which was 100 years ago.

She told me this flu killed - killed up to 100 million people.

I doubted – I flat out refused to believe her.

I thought, how could such a huge event happen and I didn't know anything about it. I thought, this happened when my grandparents were young and they never said anything about it.

1/3 of all Australians contracted the Spanish Flu – and I didn't know about it.

Well Ilona was telling me all about it but I was not having it.

Ilona is a great reader and studies history all the time – so she's well informed but this time she was wrong (in my opinion).

I doubted her for years and years - **and then along came GOOGLE.**

It's true you know – 100 years ago the Spanish Flu killed somewhere between 50 and 100 million people - twice as many people that were killed in WW1 where it all started.

GOOGLE has done the sums.

The world population in 1919 was around 1.9 billion – 75 million deaths which means that the Spanish Flu killed about 4% of the world population at the time.

How could this happen and I didn't know?

(FYI) 7 million COVID 19 deaths in a world of 8 billion doesn't even register – the number is too small %.0875 a fraction of 1%

The point is I doubted my wife because I had not heard about the Spanish Flu. She was right and I was wrong – and sometimes I'm reminded of it.

I doubt things all the time – do you doubt?

- Did they really walk on the moon – was it just a stage?
- Is the world really round?
- Did Bill Gates really make Covid to create a global vaccination and surveillance program?

Thomas doubted Jesus was alive – Would you at the time?

What about now?

What makes you doubt?

Most people doubt when they have not seen any evidence or heard any hearsay about whatever it is.

If you had seen the crucifixion of Jesus one day and three days later your friends told you that he has risen from death – would you doubt or believe?

Thomas was “somewhere else” when Jesus appeared to the other disciples alive and well.

Thomas doubted: Unless I see the scars – which I have seen before, Unless, I put my hand in the hole in his side, which I have seen before, I will not believe.

Unless I can Google it I will not believe!

“Bad wicked man Thomas”.

From now on those people who put the little sub-titles in our bibles will call you “Doubting Thomas”.

Of course if we read the chapter carefully we note that all the disciples were doubters.

They were hiding in a locked room because they were scared of the Jews.

They were grieving Jesus death.

They were feeling sad and miserable - not the way people who believe in the resurrection would feel?

As they were sitting in their doubt Jesus walked through the locked door.

Verse 20: ***Jesus showed them his hands and his side – he let them see and touch him – he proved to them he was alive.***

It was only after they saw Jesus hands and side when they believed and were overjoyed.

Funny we say nothing of the other disciples doubt but Thomas, he will always be “Doubting Thomas”

Why are we so tough on “Doubting Thomas” – he only wanted to see what the others had seen.

They were all doubters. Would we be the same?

This is life – doubting is human.

Because doubting is human we have a God of grace.

Jesus creates faith into doubtful people?

This is all about Jesus creating faith - not Thomas’ doubting faith!

“Put your hand here – put your fingers here – stop doubting and believe”

Jesus creates faith in Thomas.

And we see Thomas respond – “My Lord and My God” – this is a Jesus moment.

It’s the Job of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to create faith.

Jesus goes on to say **“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

All most every sermon I have heard on this verse has degenerated to self-glory: “How blest are we, in 2023, to actually believe in Jesus without seeing the resurrection – blah, blah, blah”.

Let’s not kid ourselves – Each and every day we rise up different forms of doubt. We even confess it in Luther’s Catechism: *“I believe I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him.*

But, The Holy Spirt has called me through the Gospel, enlightened my with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved my with the one true faith,…”

Everybody doubts – no one believes without the help of the Holy Spirit.

We tend to think that the moment Thomas stuck his fingers into Jesus side that faith and belief came over him.

We tend to think that it was the feel of those massive scars which gave Thomas faith? It’s not true.

Scripture doesn’t support this.

Scripture never suggests that faith comes from touching or feeling.

Scripture says over and over – as does Rom 10:17 – *That faith comes from hearing the good news that Jesus died, on a cross, to save us from the consequences of our sins – that we may live for ever.*

Let me put it to you that Thomas touching Jesus scars had nothing to do with his faith.

Too me it’s jumping out of the text.

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

Naughty boy – where was he?

The others tell him they have seen Jesus hands feet and side – they claim that Jesus is alive – we have seen the Lord.

Can you feel the set up?

“We have seen the Lord – we have seen and touched his hands and feet – the big hole in his side”.

“Are you going to believe us Thomas?”

It’s a test.

Thomas replies – “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.”

Can you sense a bit of anger, or contempt?

I can almost hear the door slam behind Thomas as he storms out.

A week later Thomas comes back to the eleven and Jesus appears.

Jesus goes straight to Thomas

I wonder what Thomas is thinking?

Is Jesu going to tell me off?

Jesus speaks:

Thomas – peace be with you!

Here's the faith being created – by words.

This is pure good news – where there should be condemnation there is forgiveness and acceptance.

Thomas – put your fingers on this - place your hands in hear – you too can have what the others have had.

This is pure gospel – it's saying Thomas let me help your unbelief.

Thomas – stop doubting and believe – This is pure gospel – an invitation for Thomas to join his brothers in mission.

“My Lord and my God!” is Thomas's response to a new faith created in him.

You see if Thomas believed because he poked Jesus side it all becomes very human – a faith based on experience – which is no faith at all.

Pauls says over and over, Faith comes from hearing the message that Jesus loves and forgives you.

I believe this Thomas story is very much about the good news that Thomas heard Jesus compassion rather than the scars he poked.

Now the troublesome part of the text – the bit we get excited about because “we believe and have not seen” – we are extra blessed.

Jesus says to Thomas **“You believe because you have seen me; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

Can I say this in another way?

“Thomas you believe because I have revealed myself to you - you know who I really am – your Lord and God who forgives sins and loves you”

There are those who have not seen who I really am – they will never see me – but they will know me by what you do and say so – they will be blessed by you.

Our mission is to help people know Jesus – to help them see who Jesus really is.

Surely if we love people unconditionally, forgive people unconditionally, give unconditionally they will see who Jesus really is – through us. This is our mission.

Amen.

Lord always remind us that you words and actions of love and forgiveness is what creates faith. Let us also show love with words and actions – in Jesus name – Amen.