

“Willing to Believe”

04-03-16

So here we are, one week after Easter. How's this week been for you? How are you today? Is the excitement of Easter still in the air, or has it begun to fade, or has it even vanished completely?

I ask this because in our text, we find the disciples again gathered together behind locked doors exactly one week after Easter. But before dealing with how we feel, let's look at how the disciples are doing one week after Easter!

Easter is a Season, not a Day! It's hard to deny the letdown that comes on the Sunday after the Big Event. Because of what Jesus has done on Easter, the result should last more than a day, it should last a lifetime! So this Gospel from John is the perfect text for the Sunday after Easter.

Open to John 20. The disciples had seen Jesus the same day He rose! Verses 19-20, *“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”* The disciples had been fearful, but now they were rejoicing and wanted to make sure they told everyone!

Our point man today on the Sunday after Easter is Thomas. He's often known as *“Doubting Thomas”*, and this is giving him a bad rap! But the truth is, that on this Sunday after Easter, he's our go-to guy!

When we think of Thomas, there are three things we know about him. **He's a Disciple. He's a Skeptic. He's a Doubter!** Look at his response when the other disciples give him the news of seeing Jesus. Verse 25, *“So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”* Yep! That sounds like the Thomas we know! He must have been from the Missouri, *“The Show Me State”* section of the Holy Land!

Thomas doesn't just want words, **Thomas Wants Proof!** So when we read that Thomas refuses to believe in the resurrection based on hearsay, we can think of it two ways. Our proper, church-going, religious selves wag a finger at Thomas, and say, *“Shame on you! And you call yourself an apostle!”*

But another part of us realizes that we'd be just like him and say, *“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”* If the event is true, why can't we just have verbal proof? No, we want to see, and touch, and be there! **Desire for Proof is Normal!**

If only we had been there when Peter entered the tomb and found it empty. If only we had felt our own hearts ignited by the words of the stranger on the road to Emmaus. If only Jesus had been revealed to us that evening in the breaking of the bread!

The story for Thomas, and for us, gets much clearer as Jesus appears again. Verses 26-29, *“Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although 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, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place*

it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

In our time of doubt, we’ll search, we’ll examine, we’ll question. And when we do, we’ll gain a stronger and deeper understanding of God, and our relationship with Him. Remember God’s promise? *“Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be open unto you.”*

As humans beings, we’re called to walk in Flesh and Spirit! We are to walk as G made us, human, like the rest of the world. But because we’re called His own in the waters of Baptism, we’re special in His sight. The Holy Spirit is inside us making us new and different than the world! This is an eternal promise that God has given you! It’s a promise you can hold on to without any doubt!

One week after Easter. One short week! Can you picture yourself in that crowded little room, door locked, sitting with the disciples? Where do you sit? Do you sit with Thomas, as one seeking? Or do you sit with the others, still excited from the week before? Or maybe, you sit on your own, not knowing.

Now picture Jesus standing before you, inviting you to see the nail prints in His hands, and to touch His side. The reality of who He is overcomes you! You hear yourself proclaim as Thomas did: *“My Lord and My God.”* But then you hear Jesus’ words sounding loud and clear, *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Proof is what everyone prefers. But we must come to terms with our place in history. God, in His infinite wisdom, didn’t plan that we should “be there” no matter how sincerely we wanted too! We live in a time of wonders! But when it comes to resurrection faith, ours isn’t the privilege of sight, it’s the privilege of believing! **You Need to Step out of Your Box of Doubt and Believe!**

On May 24, 1844, an amazed crowd in the Supreme Court chambers in Washington, D.C., watched Samuel Morse demonstrate his telegraph by sending a message over a wire to Baltimore, 35 miles away. In Morse code, he tapped out a quote from the Bible: *“What hath God wrought!”* Soon telegraph lines linked countries and continents, and the world entered the age of modern communication.

A diehard skeptic, Mr. Vail, who penned a message saying, *“If you can send this and Mr. Morse can read it, I shall be convinced”* was indeed convinced! At the time, it was the greatest communication either sent or received. But on Easter morning, an infinitely more powerful message was sent and has since been received for over 2,000 years by millions upon millions. *“He is not here; He is risen!”*

Blessed are you when you’re absolutely sure! Blessed are you when you believe the hearsay! Blessed are your eyes of faith that continue in hope despite frustrations and uncertainties! Blessed are you who are willing to believe! Or as Jesus says in John 20:29,

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!”

Christ HAS Risen! He Has RISEN indeed! Alleluia!