

## **“Believing is Seeing!”**

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We’ve just lived through an absolutely incredible day! The Savior we had spent time seeing suffering and dying for us left the tomb and lives again! The news of Easter can’t get any better than that! But this news didn’t exactly strike joy in the hearts of the disciples!

Last week we saw how the risen Lord first appeared to Mary Magdalene, and then Mary had the extremely important task of being an *“eyewitness reporter”* for Jesus as she *“went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord!’”* But, Mary’s report wasn’t enough to convince the disciples! They couldn’t believe even though what Mary told them was exactly what Jesus said He would do!

Turn to John 20. That Easter evening we’re told the disciples were together, with the doors locked because they were afraid they might be crucified just like Jesus! Despite Mary’s great news of having seen the risen Christ, they were still hiding behind locked doors in fear! That fear didn’t disappear until they saw Jesus!

Look at 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 belief in the resurrection didn’t happen until they saw Jesus for themselves!

Isn’t it interesting that the disciples shared the news of seeing Jesus with Thomas who wasn’t there that first evening and his response was the same as the rest of them when they had heard Mary’s words on Easter morning! Look at verses 24-25, *“Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 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.’”*

No one in the Easter story so far believed Jesus was risen from the dead until they actually saw Him! Because of this, Jesus’ words to Thomas that second week could really have applied to all of them! Look at Jesus’ words to Thomas because there’s also a message in it for us!

Look at 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.”*

Building on those words of Jesus, *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”*, look what John says in verses 30-31, *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*

Here John gives his purpose for writing his Gospel—namely, to bear witness to Jesus Christ so that others may come to believe in him. Notice though, that now at the

time of John's Gospel, the church has moved from the importance of seeing the risen Christ face-to-face, to hearing and reading the Gospel as a testimony to those who live after the fact.

The Bible, as the written Word of God, guides all post-resurrection Christians, including us today. It's through the study of the Word that we can come to faith with the power of the Holy Spirit. As we pass on this Word from generation to generation, that's how the Church grows! God continues to work and speak to us and through us. So, in a way, we're just as important as the first eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection!

It's true that the church is always one generation away from extinction! God needs each living generation to read, study, proclaim and pass on His Word and the faith we have to the next generation. This work has never been easy, especially in such a hostile world. Yet, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we're able to do it. There's so much resistance to God's Word in the world. But aren't we sometimes like doubting Thomas?

All of us would like the luxury Thomas had. All of us would prefer to see before we believe! Yet, somehow we believe without seeing Jesus in the flesh. Through the Holy Spirit working in our lives, the risen Christ is alive in each one of us. In spite of our doubts, He's able to reach us and others. Even in the smallest of thoughts, words, and actions, He speaks through us.

So water the seed of faith you have through living what you believe about Jesus Christ. He's your Savior. He came that you might have life forever! Be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive power and have a living faith and a living mission! Believing, see what God has in store for you as His ambassador to the world around you!

A visitor to France during World War II attended a village church on Easter Sunday. The worshippers were thin and poorly dressed. Their faces were drawn. Their families were separated, and their country was in despair. Yet they sang with great enthusiasm, *"Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!"* The visitor said, *"As they sang, there came into the group a strange, strong power, the power of the risen Christ, and I felt with them that no matter how dark the present might be or the future might become, there was still the strength of the risen Christ, which overcomes the world."*

Easter victory is the victory of the Resurrection for you! With Jesus Christ as your center, there's no despair only hope! In the middle of any pain or weakness, there's peace! In the place of death, there's life!

I encourage you to celebrate the Resurrection presence of Jesus Christ today and every day! Believe in the resurrected Jesus Christ! As you believe in Him, see Him for what He truly is, what He does for you each day, and what He promises! He's your Lord and Savior for eternity!