

**Sermon RPC**  
**Sunday, April 7th 2024**

**John 20:19-31**  
**“I Believe, Help My Unbelief”**

*prepared by Nehemia Neuhisa*

When the disciples told Thomas that they had seen Jesus and that he was alive, Thomas said, "I won't believe it until I see it with my own eyes." He said he wanted to see the nail-prints in Jesus' hands -- and the place where the spear was thrust into his side. And with that particular requests, it resulted for the past 2000 years, Thomas has been given a negative reputation.

People judge his lack of faith and give him a nickname: The Doubting Thomas. It doesn't matter what he did before as he followed Jesus around for three years as one of his best friends. Or what he did after Jesus ascended to the heaven as Thomas made his journey outside of the Roman Empire to places as far as India, according to tradition, to preach Christ's Gospel. He still known as Doubting Thomas, just like Betrayal Judas, as he sold Jesus to the soldiers, and Denying Peter, as he denied that he know Jesus three times before Jesus died on the cross. So for Thomas, we remember him for that one brief moment of doubt.

The story continues, a week later, Thomas finally saw Jesus. And Jesus invited Thomas to touch his hands where the nails had been. He told Thomas to put his hand in the wound in his side. This very moment was captured in one of famous Italian artist, Caravaggio imagination as he draw this piece of art.

Some of you might familiar with this painting. And for you who are not, you kinda can tell right away which one Thomas and which one Jesus in this picture. In this painting, Caravaggio captures something that went unsaid in John's gospel which perhaps was true.

It is easy to focus strictly on Thomas and his audacity to really touch Jesus' wounds, with Jesus gently helping Thomas to touch the wound in his side and the expression of awe on Thomas's face.

However what I love in this piece of art is the presence of two men standing behind them. I don't know who they are. Maybe Peter and John, but whoever they are, notice that they're not standing off to the side disengaged from the action. Both of them are all up in this scene trying to get a good look at Thomas as he pokes the wound.

And it is very make sense, if these two are other disciples, who seen Jesus in the room a week before, even though they were there to witness Christ risen the first time. They might still didn't fully believe what they were seeing. They still need more proof, and they just not brave enough to ask for it in the first place. We cannot imagine the level of anxiety the disciples were feeling at this point. All of their hopes and dreams were shattered on the cross on Friday, when Jesus died.

Even though there had been some glimmers of hope; with the three women's report and Peter and John's examination of the empty tomb. But for some reason, even after all of the times Jesus told the disciples what was going to happen, they were still disappointed, anxious, confused, and afraid because the Messiah is died, two things that not supposed to go together. At the foot of the cross as Jesus died, they might question if He really Messiah or not.

And that is what Thomas still feeling up until Jesus showed up in front of him. Thankfully, it was not a doubt of resistance to truth, but doubt that desperately desired a truthful answer. A doubt which gave birth to faith when the answer was revealed. Instead of focussing on Thomas's moment of doubt, I invite you to see the conversion of Thomas' doubt into faith, which led him to the clearest confession of Christ's divinity, addressing Jesus as "**My Lord and my God.**"

Once again, here Jesus teach something to the disciples, particularly through Thomas. And also us in our time and place. As we sometimes in the moment of doubt just like Thomas, remember that Jesus made a special resurrection appearance for Thomas. He condescended to Thomas and his desire to know for himself.

What amazing here is that Jesus came to Thomas on his level. Jesus didn't rebuke him. He didn't humiliate him for his doubting his friends' testimony. He could see that deep down in Thomas's heart, he really wanted to know God. Jesus came to him and said, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands, and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" ([John 20:27](#)).

Because, if we go back to the earlier chapter in the gospel of John, this is the same Thomas which come with bold statement, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" in John ch. 11 when Jesus wanted to depart for Bethany, when the situation was unsafe for them to travel.

And this is the same Thomas that with honesty and humility asked Jesus, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" When Jesus talked about His Father's house and that He need to leave the disciples to prepare place for them, which captured in John ch.14.

So, friends in Christ, instead of condemning Thomas as doubtful, I invite us to see Thomas as honest disciples who not ashamed of his honest curiosity and question before Christ. Who asked when he confused, and not stopping there, but he wants to be transformed by the power of Christ from doubt into faith.

And, we especially in this day and age, are rely on proof for everything. That is one of the reason not a lot of people hold any religion, perhaps. Because religion, especially Christianity ask people to have faith. To believe even without seeing it. To believe in the power that sometimes unexplainable, but real in the experience of the people of faith. And even beyond that, when having faith itself isn't not enough, because Jesus said, to

be joyful, even we believe on something we cannot see. Which contradicts with what the world asks.

Some of us might be like Thomas sometimes, because some people are skeptical by nature. I, personally have never been one to believe something just because someone says it is true. Most of the times I prefer to believe in something that I can see. And you might be someone who is skeptical about a lot of things, a bit unsure of your faith, perhaps. Or simply may have a lot of questions about Bible, about difficult things that happen in our life, and about the world that is changing and seems like walk further from the truth.

However, I hope deep down inside, we all want to know God and open to be transformed by God from skepticism into belief. From doubt to faith. Jesus reminded Thomas and all his followers that, “because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” ([John 20:29](#)) This, of course, highlights the importance of faith in the life of Christ’s followers, then and today. The receiver of disciples mission two thousand years ago, and us today as reader and listener of the Gospel. Cause we all did not see with our own eyes about what’s written in the holy Gospel.

Anytime we have question, bring it before God. Ask God’s wisdom through the Holy Spirit which is indwelling within each on of us. For our God is full of compassion and grace. Remember that Jesus may have challenged Thomas’s doubt, but he also didn’t condemn him for his lack of faith or skepticism. Instead, he came down to Thomas’s level, overcoming his fear and uncertainty with compassion and grace.

And as we learn to keep walking in our Faith in Jesus Christ, we all are invited to also be with people who are in doubt and walk along with them, helping them to listen to the voice of Holy Spirit that will guide us through every season in our life, instead of condemning them for their lack of faith. As we all are confused and in doubt at one point but led by God and God’s Spirit to believe and rely on God, now and forever.