

John 20:19-31

How inquisitive are you? Do you take things at face value, or do you search to find out if they're true? With so much false news these days sometimes it's very important to look for the truth in statements, especially when they are something you may agree with because you may have bias and the article proves your point. One subject that may seem ludicrous to you and me is that the earth is flat. If you do a Google search you will find there are a few articles supporting this theory, however the number that prove earth is a round, globe shaped object far exceeds the flat earth theorists in quantity and quality.

However, some things must be taken on faith. One of them being that Jesus rose from the grave. It is what our beliefs are based upon, and the only proof we have comes from the Bible. The Bible, otherwise known as Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. There is proof that the Bible has merit. We can examine the Bible in the same way we would examine any other text and find proof that it is true. First, the Bible encourages believers to examine their faith. 1 John 4:1 tells us to examine what we are told. Acts 17 tells us the Jewish people in Berea examined what they were told and found it all to be true. The disciples Matthew and Mark were with Jesus when he was alive, so there are eyewitnesses to the history written in the New Testament. And Paul tells us in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans that, "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them." So when we investigate our beliefs we are not committing blasphemy. We are not going against what God wants for us, no, we are strengthening our belief.

So when Thomas says he won't believe until he puts his fingers in the injuries Jesus received from being nailed on the cross, we can't condemn him for doubting. ... You know what it's like when everything around you is falling apart, and you don't think you can take one more thing going wrong? This may be where Thomas is at... Just a week prior to this Jesus had died. Thomas had staked his whole claim on the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. Thomas sat at the table with him when Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for them and asked him how they could go with him if they didn't know where he was going, and Jesus assured him they knew the way. Thomas was truly seeking to know the truth. Then two days later Jesus was dead, dying a criminal's death.

Jesus had come back to show himself to the disciples at a time when Thomas was away. Remember, the women had seen someone who told them Jesus is alive when they visited the tomb; Mary, originally believing Jesus to be the gardener, had personally seen him. Yet when they told the disciples that Jesus was alive, the disciples didn't really believe them either, not until that very same night, Jesus showed himself to them. After all he had gone through within the past few days, Thomas did not want to be deceived.

Jesus understood this. Jesus knew how Thomas felt. Jesus showed up just when Thomas needed him to be there and told him it was perfectly fine to feel the way he felt; that if he wanted to put his fingers in the wounds, he was more than welcome to do so. I don't think he actually had to do it! I think just seeing Jesus standing there, hearing Jesus' voice giving him permission to touch him, was enough for Thomas to know that Jesus truly was alive, that Jesus truly had appeared to the disciples when, for some

reason, Thomas wasn't with them, and that Jesus would never be far away from him again.

There may be times when we find ourselves yearning to touch and to be touched by the resurrected Lord. The promise of these texts affirms that Christ will meet us there in the ordinary places of life. It is there, in the everyday life of our faith that we cling to the promised presence of Christ. Our affirmation for the Sunday after Easter may be more realistic as well. The resurrection shout may go up on Easter, "He is risen!" but most Sundays we look to one another as we hold on to faith and life and give voice to those words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus breathed on the disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit when he arrived that resurrection evening. He breathed the breath of life, just as God breathed life into the human shaped form he created in Genesis, giving life to Adam. Just as we find a breath of life when we are at our lowest, seeking a way to move forward, God breathes afresh into our lives. Easter is one of the times God breathes on us as a group of believers gathered together. With the fresh start Easter gives us, the old destructive doubts begin to wither away. And as we get freed from the destructive past and the doubts, it is a little easier to believe he has risen, that we have a fresh start after all. That our sins are forgiven, and we can be free of the guilt that weighs so heavily upon us.

I wonder exactly what it was Thomas had such difficulty in believing? Perhaps it wasn't that he didn't believe in the resurrection. He may have been perfectly able to accept that someone had stood in the midst of the disciples. But perhaps he needed to be certain the one who was raised from the dead on the Sunday was the same one who was crucified on the Friday. Perhaps Thomas wanted to verify that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus wasn't some cruel hoax perpetrated on a desperate group of followers. Perhaps he wanted to make sure the risen and glorified Christ was also the suffering and dying Jesus.

And maybe we need that too. We need to know God isn't just a God who stands above it all. We need to know God is the one who knows our pain, who suffers and dies the same way we suffer and die. We need to know resurrection isn't just some game but is truly the way through our difficulties. And Jesus responds to us in the same way he responded to Thomas. He comes to us in our suffering and pain because he's been there. He knows what it feels like.

People outside the Church make this demand not only of Jesus, but of us, his church. They challenge us to demonstrate that Christianity isn't just a fairy tale religion of sweetness, light, and happy endings. Because life doesn't work that way. They challenge us to demonstrate that we truly believe what we say we believe by walking the talk. By being the hands and feet of Jesus to the world. That we believe in the resurrection by living lives that demonstrate Jesus walked the earth and that we, his followers, are still walking the earth.

So Thomas wasn't some man who baselessly doubted the resurrection, Thomas was the man who had enough courage to ask questions, to look for proof to help him believe. Thomas gives us an example of how to strengthen our faith, and proof that Jesus shows up just when we need him the most.
All glory be to God.