

A Matter of Faith

John 20:19-31

Introduction

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: "I think Thomas gets a bad rap." Jesus calls him out in front of the rest of the disciples, because he didn't believe their report that Jesus was alive. We make a big deal about how he says that he must put his finger in the nail prints in Jesus' hand and his hand into Jesus' side. He won't believe without touching Jesus and knowing it's Him. But look at **verse 28**. Does Thomas **touch** Jesus? No. When Jesus talks to him, Thomas cries out, "*My Lord and my God!*" Also, how did the disciples react when they heard Mary in **John 20:18**? She said, "*I have seen the Lord!*" But **verse 19** tells us that they stayed locked in the upper room *for fear of the Jews*. **Verse 20** tells us that it was **after** Jesus **appeared** to them and said, "*Peace be with you*", that they were glad. None of His followers believed **until** they had seen. But I guess we must have a scapegoat, someone to point at and make ourselves feel better.

It's Not About Seeing

Jesus was talking to everyone when He said, "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" (**John 20:29**). He wasn't referring to the rest of the disciples, because they had to see as well. When we say we must see it in order to believe it, what we're really saying is, "I don't believe it and I need proof." Last week we talked about some of the proofs of the Resurrection. But, the church father, AMBROSE said: *I do not demand a reason for Christ. If I am convinced by reason, I deny faith*. It's not about reason and logic. It's a **MATTER OF FAITH**. **Hebrews 11:1** says: *faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*. You see how this story naturally leads into John's purpose statement for his book—*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* (**John 20:31**). It's not about seeing or getting proof, it's about believing.

Believing Is Seeing

Have you seen the pretty pictures of the Covid virus? It looks like a little snowball with red flowers on it. Can I say that since I've never seen one, it doesn't exist? No, it's microscopic; you must use a microscope to see it. That's the way it is with Jesus. Just because you cannot see Him with your eyes doesn't mean He doesn't exist. You must look with the eyes of faith. Seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing.

It's About Believing

The most well-known verse in the Bible says: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (**John 3:16**). Preaching to the people in Cornelius' house, Peter, talking about Jesus, said, "*To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name*" (**Acts 10:43**). Paul told the Philippian jailer: "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved*" (**Acts 16:31**). According to Scripture, all we must do to be saved is **believe** in Jesus.

Why Don't More Believe?

If it's that simple, why don't more people believe? For many, it's **too simple**. They figure it's not worth it, unless they have to do something to **earn** it. They don't know how to accept a **free gift**. Many, like Thomas, must be **persuaded** that it's true. They demand **proof**, but like AMBROSE said, if it must be proven to you, then it's not faith. Whatever the excuse for not believing, it all comes back to **original sin**. That sin that we're born with has us so messed up. (Read **Romans 5:8-10**). Sin keeps us at war with God. (Read **Ephesians 2:1-6**). Being at war with God makes us **dead** in our sins. A dead person can't believe; the dead can't do anything. So, **how** do we believe?

Faith Comes by Hearing

(Read **Romans 10:17**). So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Faith isn't something we're **born** with or something we can **conjure** up. Faith is a **gift** of grace, and we receive God's grace through **Word** and **Sacrament**. When we hear the **GOSPEL**, we receive the grace to believe. Not everyone believes, because many people **resist** His grace, for the reasons mentioned earlier. But there's more to it than that.

Saving Faith

Saving faith is not just giving **mental assent** to an historical fact. We're not talking about saying, "OK, I believe that Jesus of Nazareth lived and died on the cross 2000 years ago and that He rose from the dead three days later." That's not saving faith. Saving faith grabs hold of the promise that Jesus did all that **for you**. Just as the **words of Institution** in the service of the **TABLE** say about His body and blood—*Given for you ... shed for you*. Saving faith is the faith that believes the promise that Jesus died **for you**; you have forgiveness of sins and new life because He died and rose **for you**. The Resurrection of Jesus is meaningless unless you believe he did it **for you**. It is **A MATTER OF FAITH**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
