

Get Outa Town: Part 2

John 20:19—31 (v. 25)

Introduction

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus appears to the disciples, except for Thomas, who was absent when He came to the upper room. Now, they have seen for themselves and believe that He is alive. The resurrection of Jesus is no longer an “*idle tale told by women*” (**Luke 24:11**). But when they try to share the good news with Thomas, he has the same knee-jerk reaction to their news as *they* did to the women’s: “Get Outa Town!”

Who Was Thomas?

What kind of man was Thomas? Most of what we know about him comes from extra-biblical sources. Since some of that is merely legend, we will focus on what we know of Thomas from Scripture. Aside from appearing in lists of the disciples, we only have two encounters with Thomas.

Thomas Wants to Believe

The first one is in **John 11**, where Jesus has gotten word of His friend Lazarus being sick. Two days later, after Jesus knows Lazarus is dead, He says they are going to Bethany, which is near Jerusalem. The disciples protest by reminding Him that the Jews threatened to kill Jesus. Then Jesus informs them (read **John 11:14—16**). Thomas had courage. He wanted to believe in Jesus. But he missed the point. He seemed willing to go to death with Jesus, but he was unaware of anything beyond. Though he had seen the miracles and heard Christ’s teaching, he had no idea of the extent of Christ’s power.

Thomas Doesn’t Understand

The other encounter is in the upper room, the night Jesus was betrayed, He said to His disciples (read **John 14:1—4**). Thomas replied, “*Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?*” (**v. 5**). Augustine said that the disciples knew, but did not know that they knew the place and way. Jesus reveals in the next verse that He is *the way and the truth and the life* (**v. 6**). It’s not a question of geography, it’s about knowing Jesus.

Why Was He Absent?

This brings us to our lesson today. Possibly the first question we might ask would be, “Why wasn’t Thomas in the upper room with the rest of the disciples?” Of course, John doesn’t have any comment on this. He may have just gone for a walk to clear his head. The reason doesn’t matter. But it does show what happens when you miss church.

Why Didn't He Believe?

The next question we might ask is, "Why didn't Thomas believe?" All the rest of the disciples said that Jesus appeared and talked to them. Maybe he felt cheated; he wanted to see Jesus, too. But, whatever he felt, he wasn't going to believe until he had experienced Jesus with his own senses. Thomas seemed to be from Missouri, the "Show Me" state. How many times have you heard or said, "I'll believe it when I see it?" That's the attraction of science. Everything must be quantified, must be proven. If it can't be proven, it's just a theory, like evolution.

Is Seeing Believing?

But then we must ask ourselves, "Is seeing really believing?" In **Hebrews 1** we read: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 1:1)*. That's the difference between faith and science. Science says, "I know it's real because I can prove it." Faith says, "I can't prove it, but I know it's real."

Blessed Believing

When Jesus says, "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" (**John 20:29**), He's talking about every Christian who would come after them. Since Jesus ascended into heaven, no one has seen Him with their physical eyesight. As St. Paul says in **Romans 10** – *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17)*.

Revelation

Thomas teaches us that we believe when Jesus reveals Himself. The disciples believed when Jesus revealed Himself to them (**John 20:20**). Mary believed when Jesus revealed Himself through His Word by speaking her name (**John 20:4—4**). The two on the road to Emmaus believed when Jesus revealed Himself in the breaking of the bread (**Luke 24:30—31**). We believe when He reveals Himself to us in Word and Sacrament.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
