

WEEKEND Edition 23/24 April 2022 "Thomas" (John 20:24-31)

Good morning my 'Walking with Jesus' friends on this weekend one week after Easter!

May I ask, does Easter seem much farther away than only 7 days? Oh, time runs so fast and so many things are happening in our world all around us, that a week can feel like a month or a year, can't it? *But for Mary, Jesus' mother, the disciples, and the other close friends of Jesus I think it's safe to say this past week dragged very slowly, hour after hour.* They were conflicted in their hearts. On the one hand they were fearful of those who had called for Jesus' death. Fearful that maybe they'd be terrorized or killed simply for their association with Jesus. On the other hand, they wanted to be overjoyed because many of them had seen Jesus alive last Sunday! *But because we have no record that any of them had seen Jesus alive during this week, each passing hour without His 'appearance' filled them with confusion.* Would they see Him again? Where was He when He wasn't visible with them? What did it all mean?

Through the week I assume Thomas was with one or more of the disciples several times and each time the topic of Jesus' resurrection was front and center. *But that created a problem, a tension, for Thomas had not yet SEEN the resurrected Jesus!* He had not run to the empty tomb that Sunday morning with Peter and John (John 20:3,4) perhaps because Thomas was not with them that morning? He was not one of the two who had encountered the risen Jesus on their walk to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-33) And Thomas was not with all of them when they'd been together Easter Sunday evening when risen Jesus appeared to them and spoke with them. (Luke 24:36 & John 20:19,20) *So while all the other disciples and several of the women had SEEN Jesus, TOUCHED His resurrected body and even TALKED with Him, Thomas had not.* What feelings do you suppose Thomas had as a result?

What we do know is that Thomas was really struggling trying to believe the unbelievable; trying to understand the unthinkable. Thomas knew death is final, there is no coming back from death. Oh yes Thomas had been there and SEEN Lazarus walk out of the cave where he'd been for four days after his death, but as radical as that was it was a temporary resurrection. Lazarus was just as human now as he had been before, and it would be only a matter of time and Lazarus would get sick and die, and this time it would be final, like all of us.

But Jesus was different. Thomas had heard that those who had SEEN Jesus declared that Jesus' body, which had been shredded by the beatings, the flogging and the crucifixion, *was actually healed by His resurrection!* Also, Thomas had heard Jesus' body had somehow come into the room where they were gathered last Sunday evening, *even though all doors and windows were securely locked!* It was simply too much for Thomas to understand so Thomas took a very practical position on the matter of Jesus' resurrection.

Thomas had said, perhaps several times: ***"Unless I SEE the nail marks in His hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it."*** (John 20:25)

And so, all week since Easter, each day, whenever any of the friends of Jesus saw Thomas, I'm sure they had the same question: "well Thomas, have you seen Jesus yet?" And each time that week the answer was "Not yet!" Until that Sunday night one week later, after Easter. John records this historic moment like this: ***"A week later [after Easter] Jesus' disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and He said, 'Peace be with you!'"*** (John 20:26) Look at them my friends. Eyes wide open, huge smiles, some with mouths just hanging open. And look at Thomas... what's that look on his face? Watch out now, the shock is wearing off and disciples are rushing across the room to embrace Jesus and talk with Him, don't get run over in the stampede. ***But Thomas... he's frozen in place.*** He hasn't blinked, his mouth just hangs open, he can't find any words. Can you blame him? How would you have reacted?

Jesus is walking toward Thomas now, not with a frown but with a loving smile, and a look like He's seeing an old friend He has longed to see. Thomas remains frozen in place, unable to move, barely able to breathe. Jesus is reaching out His open hands to Thomas and now speaking... ***"Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe."*** (John 20:27) His words are not harsh, there's no tone of accusation or judgment, but rather a loving invitation. Look, Thomas is holding Jesus' hand and touching the scars, and touching the scar in His side. Yes, Thomas even is looking at Jesus' feet, and sure enough, scars, just like in His hands. Look at the tears welling up in Thomas eyes, the smile beginning to curl the edges of his mouth, his breathing is rapid and now a deep breath to speak: ***"My Lord and my God!"*** All eyes turn to Jesus and then slowly applause and cheers as the disciples are once again unified in their experience and their relationship with their Master, Jesus. Peter is slapping Thomas on the back; others are hugging him... Thomas is one of them again!

Listen, Jesus is speaking again to Thomas: ***"Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have NOT seen Me yet have believed!"*** (John 20:29) Everyone turns to deep reflection. Yes, it's true, no matter how many times risen Jesus might appear in rooms like this all over Jerusalem, and then across Israel, there are millions of people all across the Roman Empire, and millions more in other lands, who have never heard of Jesus. How will it be possible for them to all experience what these in this room are experiencing this night, one week after Easter? I think they were all lost in the same deep thought... ***how will it ever be possible for someone to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ without actually SEEING Him alive, or TOUCHING Him or TALKING with Him?***

And yet Jesus just said it will happen: ***"Blessed are those who have NOT seen Me, yet have believed."***

And then as suddenly as Jesus appeared in the room that night, evidently He disappeared, for John gives us no further details of that amazing Sunday evening, one week after Easter! Had Jesus told them WHEN and WHERE He would meet them next or was it as it had been with each of the Easter appearances? Amazing, brief, sudden and with no instructions about what's next!

Some years later, when John was writing his record of Jesus' life and ministry, John wrote this as he remembered this very special evening one week after Easter: ***"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written 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 20:30,31) Oh my, what a powerful, profound declaration of truth! And for us who always want more information, more details, John assures us that yes, there was more, much, much more... but we have enough! Enough to BELIEVE, enough to TRUST Jesus. Trust the truth about Him and all He did. Trust the truth about the significance of His life and especially the significance of His death and His resurrection. *And have you discovered my friends, by TRUSTING in Jesus and His Truth we then EXPERIENCE life change! By Trusting in Jesus, we are inviting the risen Jesus to unleash His resurrection power into our lives and address the issues that are the result of sin in our world and in our lives. And that unleashes us to face tomorrow, whatever tomorrow may bring, because HE lives!!* That's what Thomas discovered that Sunday one week later. . have you?

I invite you to read, maybe more than once, this powerful 20th chapter of John, and invite Jesus to open your mind and heart to ALL He is ready to do in your life, beginning right now... And here's a song to help you consider what is possible Because Jesus Lives!

Today's Scripture is John 20:24-31.