



“From Doubt to Faith”

John 20:19-31

based on the sermon preached on 10-11-24,
available at <https://lwac.org.au/sermons> or on the podcast

CONTEXT AND KEY IDEAS

1. Jesus had been put on trial, falsely found guilty of blasphemy and crucified.
2. After his death and burial, the Sanhedrin thought their problems were over.
3. On the morning of the third day after his death, Jesus rose from the dead, appearing that first Sunday morning to Mary Magdalene, several other women, and Peter and John.
4. The evening of that first Sunday, Jesus appeared to ten of the disciples (Judas had killed himself and Thomas was not with them). Later, when the ten proclaimed to Thomas they had seen Jesus risen from the dead, he would not believe. He wanted proof.

CONNECT

What is the most fantastic thing which someone told you, which at first you found difficult to believe but which later turned out to be true?

STUDY

Read John 20:19-20

- Why were the disciples meeting with the doors locked? Of whom were they afraid? Why?
- If the doors were locked, how did Jesus get into the room? What might have changed in Jesus' resurrected physical constitution which allowed him to do this?
- What did Jesus say? Why do you think he said this? Why did the disciples need to hear this?
- Why did Jesus show them his hands and side (without them asking)? Why was this important?

- That the disciples were overjoyed is understandable. What is the most joyous occasion or event in your life you can recall? What has brought you more joy than anything else?
- The implications of Jesus rising from the dead were (and are) enormous. How much do you think the disciples at this stage grasped those implications and the enormity of them?

Read John 20:21-23

- Why did Jesus repeat his statement to in essence “be at peace!”
- Explain in your own words the command of Jesus, that as the Father had sent him, he was now sending them. Sending them where? To do what? Does this “sending” apply to us, too?
- What is the significance of Jesus breathing on them and their receiving the Holy Spirit? Had the Spirit been in them or on them before this? Was this something new? Is this reception of the Holy Spirit different than at Pentecost 50 days later, as recorded in Acts 2? If so, how is it different? If not, how is it similar? How might these two Spirit fillings compliment each other?
- Jesus’ statement about forgiving sins is weighty. What might this mean?
- Read 1 John 1:9 and Isaiah 43:25. Based on these two passages, who has authority to forgive sins, God or humans? If God, then what does this verse in John 20:23 really mean? Do some internet research to try and find an answer to that question.

Read John 20:24-29

- We don’t know why Thomas was not with the other disciples that first day, but it is possible he just could not face the reality of what had happened. What is one thing or event (it could be anything) which you struggled to come to grips with, and which took some time to accept, perhaps still does? Share about this as you are able.
- When Thomas replied he won’t believe without the proof of nail marks and side wounds, do you think he is seeking legitimate physical evidence, or is he hiding behind his reasoning and logic, when the answer is before him in the empty tomb and the other disciples’ excitement?
- Now, a week later, Thomas is with the other disciples when they are meeting in the same room as the week before. Again, Jesus mysteriously shows up. And he brings the same greeting, “Peace be with you!” This is the third time he has said this phrase. What is the significance of this, given that we have a “greeting of peace” time in many of our Anglican services?
- Jesus doesn’t castigate or belittle Thomas for his doubt, instead he reassures him by showing him his wounds, just as Thomas asked. Then Jesus declares, now that you have seen the evidence for yourself for which you have asked, stop doubting and believe.
- How much evidence is required for people to embrace Jesus as Saviour and Lord? Why might some people need more than others? How much did you need? Do some people put the

threshold of evidence so high it will never be met, thus creating an unrealistic, even false, level which they can conveniently hide behind as they claim that there is not enough evidence? Do you know anyone like this? Were you ever like this? Share about this as you are able.

- For you and in your experience, what is the single most important piece of evidence for the reality of Jesus Christ as resurrected Saviour and Lord? Why might your evidence requirement be different than that of others?
- To Thomas' credit, once he sees the evidence for himself, he immediately believes and openly declares that he believes. Note that Thomas does not just call Jesus "Messiah," which means "anointed one," but he calls him God. In a sense, though his belief starts later than that of the other disciples, it may have rocketed forward past theirs as the other disciples may not yet have been ready to openly declare Jesus "God."
- Jesus makes a very important declaration in v. 29. Put this declaration in your own words. Who is included in the group of "those who have not seen and yet believe"? Does this group include you and me?

Read John 20:30-31

- John includes a statement that Jesus did lots of other miraculous signs of which the disciples were witnesses. In other words, there is more which Jesus did and taught which is simply not recorded in the gospels we have.
- But he goes on to say that what has been written is given for two reasons:
 - that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
 - and that by believing this we may have life in his name

APPLY

- Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ and so believing, have life in his name? Pray with someone else about any lingering doubts you may have, for assurance of faith.
- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?
- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.
 - 1.
 - 2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.