

Are You a Doubting Thomas?

April 8, 2018

**Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If I were to mention certain disciples' names, you might think of a word that describes the disciple. While each of you might think of a different adjective, for the most part I'm pretty sure that we could come up with some common thoughts about several of them. Take for instance, John. I'm sure that many of you might think "beloved" – as in the disciple beloved by Jesus. Or if I said the name, Judas. You might think of the word, "betray". Since Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. Or if I said the name, Peter. You might think "outspoken". And so when you hear the word Thomas – I'm sure that you think of the word "doubt". While Thomas was at times bold in his faith, many refer to him as "Doubting Thomas."

Our Gospel reading for today tells us that the disciples were together. While they were there with the doors locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" He did so to reassure them that He had been risen from the dead. He showed them his hands and side, and the disciples were overjoyed. But Thomas wasn't there with them. So he was told by the disciples. But Thomas said to them, "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.” He wasn’t going to just believe because others told him the news.

That seems to be the case in our world today as well. There are a lot of people who will not believe because someone tells them something. Many people don’t know quite who to believe. And with the phrase, “Fake News” it seems like it’s harder to believe news that’s designed to influence you one way or another – either through the information or being deemed as “fake.” All of it can leave people skeptical and unsure what, if anything, they should believe. That is, until you experience it yourself.

Maybe that’s why, in our text, we’re told that Jesus appeared to His disciples again a week later. This time Thomas is there with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them again. He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Jesus didn’t blame Thomas for his doubt.

Jesus probably knew that Thomas needed to work through his doubts, just like we do from time to time. The sin that we commit leads us away from Jesus’ presence. Away from other believers. It can cloud our judgement and even increase our doubts about Him. Yet, even Jesus had times of doubt. He Himself, having the sins of the world placed on Him, cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He died on the cross for us, but the Good News is that He rose again

on the Third Day. He is our Risen Lord, saving us from sin, death, and the devil.

Today He comes again to us to help us believe in our times of doubt. He didn't blame or condemn Thomas, and He doesn't blame or condemn us. Faith isn't the absence of doubt, rather it's the overcoming of doubt. While we can't physically see Him, Jesus comes into our presence, when we are gathered here on a Sunday morning, to tell us to stop doubting and believe. He does so through His Word. He does so by offering us His very body and blood in/with/and under the bread and the wine. He helps us to believe once again that He is Risen From the Dead. Jesus said to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who haven't seen and yet have believed."

If you're not aware already, "Doing Life Together" is the name for our all small groups here at Our Savior's Way. Some groups meet during the 9:30 hour on Sunday mornings, some meet at different times and locations throughout the week. You can find out more about our small groups on our website or you can stop by our Welcome center for a brochure. If you're not participating in a small group, you're missing out on a wonderful way to learn and grow in the faith. Gathered around the Word of God, many of our members participate in our small groups. These groups help us to connect with others who also experience doubts from time to time. By sharing experiences and expressing honest doubts, these doubts can give way to joy that says with believing faith, "My Lord and my God!"

This the peace that Jesus brings to us, so that we might share this confession of faith with our friends, neighbors and out into distant places of the world. A world that seems to be increasingly filled with “fake news”, yet needs to hear the Good News that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who has died for the sins of the whole world, and that by believing they too may have life in His Name.

Christian tradition holds that after Thomas made his confession, he went on to be a great evangelist and missionary – traveling from Jerusalem all the way to India, sharing the Good News with the world around him. Many came to know Jesus because of his confession - that Jesus is in fact Risen from the Dead. May each one of us be strengthened in our faith and empowered to say to the world around us - Christ Has Risen – He is Risen Indeed. Alleluia.

And now, may that peace which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in that same Christ Jesus until He comes again.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.