

Pastor T.C. Arnold
2nd Sunday of Easter
John 20:19-31
April 15th, 2012

I think out of all the disciples I can most identify with Thomas. That may sound strange for anyone to admit because he is the doubting one – or better put – the disbelieving one. Why would anyone admit that they identify with the disbelieving (even if it just briefly) disciple? Well, maybe because to me Thomas sounds most like the people I know... people like me... who can be very pessimistic about various situations and life.

I kind of get the idea that Thomas was hanging his head low, not really able to hold a decent conversation with anyone because of his grief, depressed because his teacher and Lord was gone and all that he was saying and doing had all been for naught. Thomas was reacting to the way he was feeling.

We have been like that. “Oh, that will never happen,” we say. “Oh, I just can’t believe that to be true... I will just have to see it,” we say. We perhaps say such things because we simply don’t want to believe it – we are angry, depressed, obstinate, and disagreeable and will say the opposite of whatever someone else says to be true – even if it is true.

Thomas was absent when Jesus came the first time and told them, “Peace be with you,” and then breathed the Holy Spirit on them. Why? Because he was obstinate, disagreeable and refused to believe. He succeeded in one thing only – and we can all relate to this – He succeeded in keeping himself wretchedly miserable in his own unbelief for an entire week. To think that “one of the Twelve” could do such a thing as this.

Yes, we can believe it. Thomas was human and could succumb to real unbelief. Perhaps the way he was acting was the reason why John here calls him “Didymus” which means “Twin”. Some think that “Twin” refers to his character. He was a man divided – one who believes and one who doesn’t. This is probably not the reason why John called him the Twin, but we can relate. Have you ever been the twin – the one who looks like you – but for some reason you act differently than who you are – when something happens? It does not flatter you. You are embarrassed by the way you acted. Perhaps you are like me. Now you can see how I can identify with a man like Thomas.

Place yourself there in that upper room when the disciples were explaining what happened to Thomas. They must have said more than just “*We have seen the Lord.*” I wonder if Thomas was made to listen to the entire story with all its details, that of the women and of Mary Magdalene, that of Peter and John who had seen the tomb, that of the two Emmaus disciples, and that of the entire company behind the locked doors. How long was it? How long did he have to sit there and listen to them? We can just imagine how mad he must have been – or getting further and further into his frustration over the things they were saying. He wasn’t going to believe it.

Unbelief always was and always will be unreasonable. This is glaringly plain in the case of Thomas. Even though there was unanimous testimony of all those people, he was not going to allow it to amount to anything. The dream of Jesus being alive is impossible, and this has been conceived in his very own unbelief. Thomas is determined to set himself against them all. The more they speak and the more they present the facts, the more stubborn Thomas becomes.

This is how it works. The unbeliever makes himself a superior person, looking down on believers as credulous fools who cannot be trusted. The wisdom of the unbeliever exceeds that of all other men (so they think). Thomas is surely typical of the entire class. So he acts the way we see him act.

Not so unfamiliar is it? Yes, you know the type. But I wonder if you have been the type yourself. I have. And it may not in any way be about your faith in your Lord. But rather, it's about the way you know how to do your job better – or the way you know how to parent better – or the way you know to win souls for Jesus better – or how to be a better husband, wife, daughter or son. You know better.

It might be true – you might know better. Could it be true that someone else knows more and that being open to understanding might mean your own personal growth? Perhaps.

But when it comes to Jesus, we know better, if we know what the Word of God says. If we know the Word then we know far better than the unbeliever in all his infinite wisdom. We know better not because we know more, but because we know Him! And this is what Jesus wanted Thomas to know. *“Bring thy finger here and see my hands; and bring thy hand and thrust it into my side: and be not unbelieving but believing.”*

Beloved in the Lord, do you want to know better? Do you want to know the truth? Then look at Jesus and put your hand in His side. Look at Jesus – our Lord – who is not some idea or feeling or philosophy. No, Our Lord has a side with a deep gash where uncompassionate men thrust spears. Look at Jesus – you can see Him with your eyes. He IS the Word – the Word made flesh and you have the revelation that brings the gift of salvation to your very lives. Look at Jesus – He lived and then died and the lived again. Look at Jesus, Thomas, and stop disbelieving and believe. Look at Jesus, Thomas, by His wounds you are healed – you have faith – you have life – and that is greater than man's greatest wisdom.

Christ Jesus is our wisdom and our strength. Still in the glow of the empty tomb, we stand before our Lord confessing His faith. We stand before His throne at God's great command. Jesus says, *“Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* When we hear those words we think, they are for sure for me. Listen to the command of Jesus to Thomas. These words are for you too. *“Bring your finger here,”* Jesus says. *“Put your hand here,”* Jesus says. *“Stop disbelieving and believe,”* Jesus says.

And now Thomas believes. He says, *“My Lord and my God!”* Don't forget, this was the same man who, after Jesus spoke of the death of Lazarus said to the other disciples, *“Let us also go, that we may die with him.”* A man of faith says such words. Perhaps this is why I can relate to a man like Thomas. He is both hot and cold. He is passionate about Jesus to the point of wanting to die with Him, and then passionate that Jesus Himself was not alive when all the disciples said He was.

I can identify with a disciple like this. Thomas was hot and cold. He was passionate in a way that would lead him to death and passionate about how Jesus was not alive again. Sometimes anger, even depression, can cause us to be pessimistic about specific situations in life. I've been there and I imagine you have as well. It just will not turn out the way we hoped. It just won't work out. Why do these things always happen to me?

Life is rough in these ways. But the life that Jesus lived was for the sake of a life to come where all such things that trouble us will do so no more. Jesus is the way the truth and the life. His hands and side show us what compassion taken upon the Lord looks like – compassion for you and your life. And now Jesus says, *“Peace.”* He says, calm down. In me is your peace and life and forgiveness. In your ups about your Lord, peace. In your downs about your Lord, peace. May God continue to bless you and keep you in this peace He grants to you. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts in Christ Jesus, until life everlasting. Amen.