

May 1, 2011  
 Sermon for Second Sunday of Easter  
 St. Peter Lutheran Church  
 Bowie, TX  
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
 John 20:19-31 (ESV)

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, **“Peace be with you.”** <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, **“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”** <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”** <sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” <sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, **“Peace be with you.”** <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, **“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”** <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, **“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Out of curiosity, I looked back at the past two sermons that I preached on the Second Sunday after Easter and found that I always seem to preach about Thomas, or doubting Thomas as he has become known.

I wondered why and it seems simple enough. That is the natural state of sinful man. We tend to doubt. As a child we begin by trusting others; but it does not take long, sometimes even before we can even walk, we begin to learn that we **cannot trust everyone in this sinful world.**

There was a lesson that I was taught when dealing with earthly things: “Believe nothing that you hear and only about half of what you see.” Sounds like a harsh, distrusting teaching, but in this world of sin, often this rule of thumb is a good one to follow. Goes along with “If it’s too good to be true, it probably is”, as well as many other sayings that we use.

This brings us to Thomas. He was absent the day that Jesus came to His disciples and other followers who were hiding in the locked room, fearing for their lives, fully expecting to be the next ones crucified for their beliefs. Although they thought Jesus was dead, they still clung to their beliefs. Then Jesus arrived, through the locked doors, and said: *“Peace be with you”*. A normal Hebrew greeting but in their current circumstance, I’m sure it was a very welcome greeting. They were not peaceful, they were scared and here was their Savior, standing with them, Wow!

As they struggled with their shock and were overcome with joy, Jesus again said, *“Peace be with you”* and further said, *“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”* He gave them peace and then told them of their coming mission, the great commission to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations.

Further, to aid them in their task, to kind of hold them over until the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit telling them *“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;”*

A wonderful joyous occasion as the disciples see and talk to Jesus once again and now we go back to Thomas. The disciples had received the sustaining gift of the Spirit and their faith was strengthened, Thomas didn't have that advantage. He said: *“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”*

We often call those that don't believe what they are told, “Doubting Thomas”” Going back to the lesson I learned as a child, sometimes it's easy to identify with Thomas. It just doesn't make sense sometimes as we look at the world and see the rampant sin and strife. We look at ourselves and wonder what is the difference? What did Christ die for anyway. Did He really rise from the dead? If He did, what difference did it make?

Believe it or not, EVERYONE is wracked by these doubts now and then.

Sin continues to weigh down on us; the devil constantly tempts and torments us in our lives, telling us that we are nothing, why would God send His only Son to die for you? Why bother? What have you done to deserve salvation anyway?

Satan produces all of these other false religions that depend upon works for salvation, even some Christian denominations tell us that we have to do our part in order to be saved...and we are tempted to buy into this nonsense because it sounds reasonable. We messed up so we should have to pay for it, our debts, our payments. If that's the case the what was the point of Christ's perfect sacrifice if we have to do a little more? There is no OUR part!! Can we really out sin the perfect sacrifice; the blood of Christ?

The devil would have us believe so but we read in Hebrews 10:  
"*... 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.' And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.*"

Let's take a look at how Jesus handled the doubting of Thomas. Jesus didn't come into the room ranting at Thomas, saying "How dare you doubt my resurrection, who are you to ask to touch my wounds, to put your hands into my side, just who do you think you are!" No, but as our text tells us, Jesus came among them a week later when Thomas was with them and His opening words again were "*Peace be with you*". Then He turns directly to Thomas and says "*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.*" Gently rebuking Thomas, Jesus gives him his proof and then tells him to stop doubting and believe.

Thomas was corrected, much like one would a small child. And Thomas cries out, *“My Lord and my God”*, A great confession of faith in Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus gives Thomas as well as other doubters in the group another gentle rebuke “Have you believed because you have seen me? “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Intellectually, we all have Thomas in our midst. Logically it makes no sense #1 that God would bother sending His Son as a sacrifice for a bunch of sinners that wouldn't appreciate it anyway and even past that, #2 a man could rise from the dead. We just have trouble wrapping our brain around that concept...yet it is all true. We don't have to understand it intellectually for it to be true.

Man has taken Human DNA down as far as we are currently able, some think that we are able to even clone another human successfully...but that doesn't mean that we understand it. Even something that we use every day, our car...how many of us really understand how that works? Well a mechanic can tell you how it all fits together, a scientist can tell you that when certain components in the fuel come together there are volatile components that cause the fuel to burn causing the combustion that makes the engine run, but even though you might know how it works, you still can't really say why all of those things work, it just does, sort of like algebra and other higher math, you just know if you do the formula, intellectually, theoretically, it is right.

In much the same way, we look at verses 30 & 31 and read:

<sup>30</sup> *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;* <sup>31</sup> *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

We have our formulas of salvation through Jesus Christ. We might not understand how it works...but it does. Through Christ's perfect atonement for our sins, we have salvation and eternal life. It's that simple, yet we still make it complicated and we have our doubts.

When the devil brings out our intellectual Thomas, we too can receive a booster shot of the Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith. We receive the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper and also through God's Word.

Jesus knows us, He lived among us and understands how hard we have to work to defeat the devil. Jesus defeated the devil on the cross, once and for all, but even though he has been defeated, he continues to try to take us with him. To aid us in our battle, to aid us in our belief, we have the Word of God to strengthen us in our struggles. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 to "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Praise be to God that not only does He save us from our sins but then gives us the power to believe in His Word.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria