

THE WORD FOR TODAY

JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS (John's Gospel Chapter 20, verses 24-31)

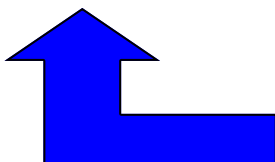


After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to various individuals on Easter Day (some of these encounters are described in the early part of this chapter), and in particular to the main group of disciples meeting in a locked room.

We can only imagine the impact of seeing the risen Jesus on these ordinary men and women. He had suffered the most degrading trials, appalling torture and cruel death on the cross on the Thursday night and Good Friday; he had been laid in a tomb sealed with a large stone and guarded by soldiers. Because of the Jewish Sabbath on the Saturday they had been unable to do anything but now on the Sunday they heard that the stone had been rolled away and some were saying that they had seen Jesus. It seemed to them incredible. Then suddenly, despite the door being locked, he was there with them and they could believe it—they “were overjoyed”.

Thomas was missing from all these encounters, and this passage takes up the story from that point.

Follow the words of this passage, beginning on the north wall of this little building. You will then walk round the church building anti-clockwise, pausing at various benches to read and think. There are seven boards to read. We use the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway. The whole “Word for Today” can be found on the church website, www.libertonkirk.net



Turn immediately left to find the first Bible extract on the bench

“Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

1

It was incredible news to Thomas. Jesus was definitely dead on Friday and laid in a tomb. How could the disciples have seen him alive? Thomas was the sort of person who liked to understand what was going on—it had been out of character for him to encourage the disciples to go with Jesus to Jerusalem where people wanted to kill him, without understanding why Jesus was doing it. It had seemed right, and he had stepped out in faith on that occasion, but he just couldn't accept on trust that Jesus had come back from the dead.

Many of us are like Thomas—a bit cynical about things which seem too good to be true. Perhaps with all the scams about these days it's good to be wary. With Jesus, however, the stories have been recorded for us by witnesses and they are in a book which has been around for centuries. It's for us to decide whether to trust or not.



***Lord, help me to believe in you.
Help me to take that leap of faith to know that you are alive.
Keep me close and deepen my faith.***

(No. 2 is on the bench just round the corner of the church building you are looking at. This might mean having to walk on the grass if scaffolding is in the way. If so, and if you want to avoid this, take the left-hand path and walk round the church clockwise until you find No. 2)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“But he 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.”

2

Thomas wanted proof—it was just too much to take on trust, even from his close friends. He wanted it to be true, but he wanted to be sure.

A man once came to Jesus with a son with very bad convulsions which had almost killed him at times. He asked Jesus to help him, saying “if you can”. Jesus replied “if you can? Everything is possible for him who believes.” and the man said “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.”

If you have any doubts about Jesus, ask for the help you need to get rid of them.



***Lord, I want with all my heart to believe,
but there are niggling doubts.
Help me to overcome those doubts
and be totally convinced.***

(No. 3 is further along this side of the church)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’

Then 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.’”

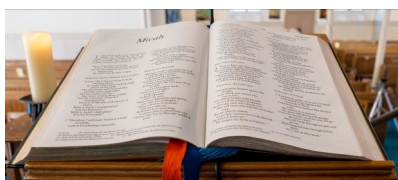


Jesus of course knows exactly what is going on—what Thomas has said. He could just have sighed and ignored it, but he confronts it. After greeting everybody in the usual way he singles out Thomas and asks him to touch his wounds, and to stop doubting and believe. He acknowledges Thomas’s needs with compassion.

It’s reassuring to know that Jesus doesn’t write us off if we have doubts—he helps us to overcome them. Jesus loves us and wants us to believe in him and find the full life he promises.

*Lord, thank you that you are patient with me.
Teach me to come to you when doubts creep in.
Help me to understand and to resolve my doubts.*

(Walk along the back of the church to find No. 4 on the bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

4

Thomas knew instantly when Jesus spoke to him that he needed no further proof. He didn't need to touch Jesus. He had had a personal encounter with the risen Lord and his doubts were swept away. There was nothing to do but worship his Lord and Saviour, the living God.

It is so good sometimes just to worship God—just to acknowledge his greatness, or his goodness, or his love. There are so many reasons to worship him—it should be our response more often!



***Lord, I give you all my praise.
Let me not hold back when I worship you
because you are truly an amazing, wonderful God
and you love me!***

(Walk further along the back of the church and turn right to find No. 5 on the bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”

5

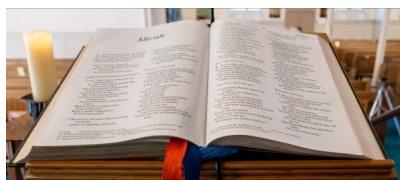


Jesus knew people would need to believe without seeing him in the flesh—he knew he would not remain on earth, and his church would not grow if every believer had to have seen him. How would God’s Kingdom be established?

Those of us who know Jesus in our lives will testify that knowing Jesus as a friend is such a privilege and a joy. His presence with us is something we cherish day by day, and something we nurture through our prayers and through absorbing all we can about him from the Bible and the teaching we get through our church. If you would like to know Jesus in your life, why not pick up a TryPraying booklet from the Offering House at the Gate to the Kirkyard and follow it for a week? It could be life-changing!

***Lord, thank you for being there for me.
Come into my life and be my friend,
my Saviour and my God.***

(You will be able to see No. 6 on the first bench before the tower)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“Jesus did many other miraculous signs
in the presence of his disciples,
which are not recorded in this book.”***

6

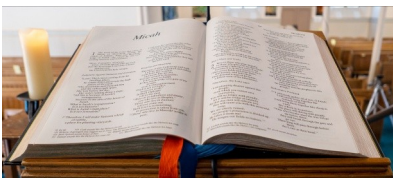
The disciples were privileged to see with their own eyes things happening which showed Jesus as God. John knows that he couldn't include all of them in his Gospel.

We know that our God is a living God—and we can also know him at work in our world. Not necessarily in miraculous healings, although these do happen and people in our congregation will testify to that, but every day in our world. I remember someone at our church saying that every baby born was a miracle. We just need eyes to see and hearts to understand what God is doing in this world.



***Lord, thank you that you are my living Saviour.
Open my eyes to see you alive and at work in the world,
where wonders are seen and good triumphs over evil.***

(You will find No. 7 beside the Covid Memorial and the Cairn, just past the tower)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“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.”***

7

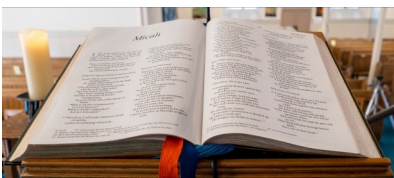
What John, as all the Gospel writers, did was to select things to tell us. He chose what he thought would be the most convincing things to help us believe. If we believe we have the prospect of forgiveness of sins and the hope of everlasting life.

How privileged we are to have these records of Jesus' life on earth in our Bibles. To know from people who knew him, witnessing to what they saw, prepared to share this good news. We can't really imagine not having the Bible available. Are we always as committed to telling other people what Jesus means in our lives?



***Lord, thank you for the Bible, and for the Gospels
which tell me of Jesus' life on earth.
Make me more willing to share the good news of Jesus with others.***

***Liberton Kirk has no minister at the moment, but you can contact us at
minister@libertonkirk.net and your request will be dealt with by the appropriate person.***



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