

John 20:24-31

Dear Friends in Christ,

When you hear so-called Bible scholars saying that there are no such things as miracles; that all the things that Jesus did have a logical, scientific explanation; that this includes his resurrection from the dead, it was no miracle either, Jesus simply passed out or went into a temporary coma and the coolness of the cave in which they laid him caused him to regain his senses; that all the post-resurrection appearances recorded for us in the Bible were stories made up by the Apostles to make Jesus seem greater than he actually was-- When you hear things like that, what's your reaction? Do you get angry? Do you think, "well, they are just being stupid. When Jesus returns in glory they'll see how wrong they are?" What do you do with someone who stubbornly insists that the resurrection never happened, or that Jesus isn't the Son of God, the Savior of the world? Isn't it tempting to think, or say, "Oh well, if they don't get it they don't get it," and just forget about them?

Thomas was one of those who stubbornly refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. He was one of the twelve Apostles. He had been with Jesus from his baptism on. He saw everything Jesus had done. He heard everything Jesus had said. When Jesus decided to go back to Judea because he had received word from Mary and Martha that Lazarus was sick, and Thomas knew that would give Jesus' enemies the opportunity they were looking for to arrest him, Thomas said, **Let us also go that we may die with him.** Yet, even though he heard the testimony of the women, and Mary Magdalene, and Peter and John, and the Emmaus disciples, and the other apostles all claiming that they had seen Jesus alive, he still refused to believe it.

You know what he said: **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.** Not only did he want to see before he believed, but he wanted to be able to touch Jesus. It seems that he might have been willing to believe that they had seen a ghost or a spirit, or maybe some kind of vision, but he certainly couldn't believe that it was really Jesus' body risen from the dead. Only if he could actually touch him, only then did he feel that he could be certain that Jesus' body had risen from the dead.

Though we would certainly be tempted to give up on someone like Thomas, Jesus didn't. In loving concern for Thomas, so that he would not remain in unbelief and, after being with Jesus during his ministry, end up being condemned, Jesus appeared the week after Easter especially for Thomas. Just as he had on Easter evening, when Thomas was not there, Jesus appeared in the upper room when Thomas was there. Just as the rest had told him had happened on Easter evening, even though the doors were locked, suddenly there was Jesus. But this time Jesus addressed Thomas directly. He used Thomas own words against him. Even though Jesus had not been visibly present when Thomas spoke his stubborn words of unbelief, Jesus said, **Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side.** "I heard what you said Thomas. Go ahead, if that's what it takes to convince you that I am risen from the dead, here I am."

What great love Jesus shows Thomas! How true it is that he doesn't want anyone to perish but all to come to repentant faith and be saved!

Jesus' actions had the desired effect. We can't tell from what John records for us if Thomas ever actually put his finger in the nail marks, or his fist in Jesus' side. Jesus' presence and show of omniscience may have been enough. Whether he touched Jesus or not, he was no longer

doubting, or literally “an unbelieving one”, he was now “a believing one.” He confessed, **My Lord and my God!** He confessed that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and **by believing** he had life; he was saved.

Whether or not we like to admit it, we are stubborn unbelievers like Thomas. That’s the way we were born into this world. By birth we have hearts that are as hard as rocks. By nature we think, there is no such thing as resurrection from the dead. How does Jesus overcome our stubborn unbelief?

Jesus told Thomas and the others that he wasn’t always going to pop in on people in order to prove his resurrection. He had told them that he was going to a place where they were not able to follow, he would go and prepare a place for them and come back later to take them there. They would see him physically ascend into heaven and return to his rightful place at the right hand of God. He said to Thomas, **because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.** Not everyone is going to have the opportunity you have just had, Thomas.

So, how is it that Jesus shows his love to us and brings us from stubborn unbelief to faith if he’s not going to appear to us in person? John tells us. **These are written that you may believe.** He has chosen to work through the word that the Holy Spirit has caused to be written and preserved for us. The Holy Spirit guided John as he chose examples from the many miracles Jesus performed during his ministry and the many appearances he made after his resurrection and had him record just these. In the next chapter John says that if everything Jesus said and did were recorded the **whole world would not have room for all the books;** there would be way too much to read and digest. These things that the Holy Spirit guided John and the other Apostles to record tell us all that we need to know.

The fact that Jesus walked on the water, stilled the storm, healed the blind, made the lame walk, raised the dead, and appeared in the upper room in his resurrected body not just once but twice; the fact that even someone like Thomas who stubbornly refused to believe saw and had opportunity to touch Jesus’ resurrected body and was brought from unbelief to faith is more than enough to prove that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.** He was just who he needed to be to win salvation for the world. He was a real human being who, like us, was under the law of God and man; a true human being who, like us, was subject to temptation, pain and death. Yet, he was **declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead;** true God, able to keep the law perfectly in our place; true God, able to have his suffering and death be payment in full for all our sins and the sins of the whole world.

As we hear the testimony of the Apostles who say to us what they did to Thomas, **“We have seen the Lord,”** as we hear Jesus say, **Stop doubting and believe,** the Holy Spirit is working to overcome our stubborn unbelief and move us to confess with Thomas, **my Lord and my God.** It is only through faith that we receive all that he has done for us and that we can **have life in his name.** As Peter proclaimed, **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.** And faith comes from hearing the message, from listening, reading and studying these things that are written.

There will always be those like Thomas who stubbornly refuse to believe. We ourselves were born in stubborn unbelief. When we encounter such people, remember the love of Jesus for you and for them. In love, he appeared to Thomas and showed him his hands and feet. He appeared to Thomas so that he would believe and have life. In love he had John record this

incident for us and he had the Holy Spirit not only preserve it, see to it that we have heard and read it. He reminded Thomas and us that he would not always show himself to people. But it is through what is written that you and I have experienced God's love and been brought from stubborn unbelief to faith. It is only through believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God that anyone can have forgiveness and eternal life.

Although Jesus isn't going to appear in person to stubborn unbelievers as he did to Thomas, we need to keep showing our love for them by continuing to point them to what is written so that they might **believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.**