

John 20 - Doubting Thomas

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to see all of you and it's good to see a number of visitors and some of the Kellers running along the wall at the back. They'll be in 10 minutes.

So John, there's people still to trundle in. But we're early. It's only four or five minutes past at this stage. Those who are visiting with us, you're very welcome. It's good to see some familiar faces from the wedding on Friday as well.

If you're able to stay behind, please do so. There's tea and there's coffee served through, perhaps through there. We might come through here as well if we need to at the end of the service.

The evening service is at 6 and God willing I'll preach at that. 6 till 7, shorter service as we probably finish off our studies in the Book of James tonight.

The Youth Fellowship meets at half past 7 tonight and Stuart is there and Stuart's going to share a word of testimony as he speaks at the Youth Fellowship tonight.

[1 : 05] Half past 7 here at the church. They're coming to the Kellers. There's some seats down here at the front. No, there's seats down here at the front. The Ladies Bible Study meets tomorrow at 8pm here in the church and the Road to Recovery on Tuesday at 8 in the church also.

Peer meeting on Wednesday at half past 7. Be encouraged to come along to that and I hope to be away in the U.S. from Saturday through to Monday of this week for a vacancy committee meeting and preaching on Sunday.

So, Angus, who preached here a few weeks ago, did two of four that he made mention of in the sermon. So, as soon as he made mention of these two of four that he was preaching, I phoned him and said, you may as well do the other two on Sunday that I'm away.

So, Angus will be preaching more than me in the next Sunday. You'll notice at the back of your sheet, there's an update from the Deacon's Court just regarding how we can give in relation to the building and the completion or the almost completion of that.

You can just note that at your own convenience. A couple more intonations. First of all, tins, trays, boxes from various events should be collected from the kitchen. Kitchen, church cleaning rotas are available for collection also at the door.

[2 : 44] So, if you volunteered, your name will be on one of these teams and please take a rota with you and turn on at the proper time. Angus, I know, wants to say just a wee word of information as well.

So, ask Angus to come on. Why not? Step to any young people? I simply want to thank the church sincerely for all the work done for the wedding.

Thanks to Farah for presenting. Thank you, Angus.

Thank you, and Mary and Dave's wedding. And we pray God's blessing on them in their married life together. We pray. I'm going to share a text with you from Nurse Marion.

Nurse Marion is one of our congregation, for those who are visiting. And she's out in Malawi and gives us an update every few days. So, I'll just read it as I have it here.

[4 : 09] She says, Our first week is over. We can hardly believe it. God has been very good to us. There are signs of progress at some of the villages we have visited. Others are a little slower, but all are very keen to learn more health.

The Bible study groups and creches are going well. The children's Bible clubs are having huge success. In one village, how many children do you think in one village are attending the holiday club, boys and girls?

Have a guess. Alistair. How many? Pick a number. 20.

Not 20. Higher. Bethany. John Rory. 49. Not 49. Precise, but not right.

Jono. 99. 99. Higher than that, I'll tell you, because this could go on a while. 850 children. The Bible study groups and creches are going well.

[5 : 16] The Bible clubs are having huge success. In one village, there are 850 children attending clubs throughout the week. The purchase of land for Dockless has finally gone through.

It has taken two years. Everything moves very slowly here. That is really exciting. Now the hard work begins. Fundraising, agreeing on what we need, making plans, etc.

But to God, be given the praise. And she says, looking forward to a restful day tomorrow. That's today. Every blessing to you all regards money.

So it's good to hear from her and of the work progressing. And we remember her in prayer. Now let's pray together. Amen. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day.

We thank you for the words that we have been privileged to sing as we praise you. We thank you that we are called to say and enabled through Christ to say, Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.

[6 : 20] What a foretaste of glory divine. We thank you, Lord, for the taste of glory that we receive when we come into relationship with you.

We thank you that we can come to the Father through Jesus the Son. And we thank you that this is the work of the Holy Spirit to show us our sin and to draw us to Jesus as Saviour.

We thank you, Lord, even as we have sung for the vastness of your love and the hugeness of the price that was paid to make it possible for us to be children of God.

The purchase of God, the blood of Christ that was shed at Calvary so that our sin could be forgiven and so that we could freely come to the one who calls us to find rest and peace and joy and purpose in following him.

So enable us, we pray, each one of us to be able not just to say with our lips but to say from our hearts that Jesus is mine. And for any here this morning who have not yet given their lives to Christ, we pray that you would draw them, that they would see their sin and that they would see and come to Jesus.

[7 : 36] We pray for any who may have been wandering in past days or weeks or months. We will read shortly of Thomas who we know for his doubting.

And we are people who are frail in our minds and in our commitment, Lord. And like Thomas, at times we can stray and wander and doubt and disobey.

But we thank you that you are our God who does not let us go and we pray that you would draw back the wanderer, that you would cleanse from sin, Lord.

And that you would restore and renew as you did to Thomas. We ask, Father, that you would be near to us as we would seek to worship you this day. We pray that we would know the rest of your day, that peace, that strength, renewing joy of being in your presence.

And what we pray for ourselves, we pray for Marian. We thank you for her and for the update from her. We pray that truly she would have a restful day, that she would know your presence with her today.

[8 : 41] And, Lord, that the word that has been shared in villages and with so many children over these last days would bear much fruit, that it would achieve much for your glory, for the sake of your name, for the salvation of souls.

So, Lord, we pray that you would bless her, that you would be near to her, that you would bring her back to us in due course and in safety and refreshed and encouraged. We pray, Lord, your blessing on Mary and Dave.

We thank you for their marriage. We thank you, Lord, for all that we were able to share in on Friday. And we ask, Father, that they would continue to seek you and to know your joy and your presence in their marriage as they go into the future.

We know that as we acknowledge you, Lord, you are the one who directs our paths. And we pray that you would direct their path, that they would know your presence and that their lives and their marriage would be a testimony to your glory.

We pray for all those who are visiting with us today. We thank you for them, for the fellowships that they're connected with, Lord, that you would bless them and that you would build your church wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached.

[9 : 56] We pray for those absent from us today. Some who are sick and who are recovering from operations, even this week. We think of K-TAC and others. We pray for others who may be sad and cast down their minds, who may feel weak in their bodies.

We pray, Father, that whatever their need is, that you would meet each one at the point of that need. And we ask now, Lord, that you would continue with us, that you would go before us, that you would be present amongst us.

And what we pray for ourselves here in this building, we pray for all the fellowships of your people across this village and across this island and across the nation and all nations.

Hear our prayers. Cleanse us from our sin. Enable us to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus. Let's pray for we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, most of you are in front of me here just now.

If there are others you want to come down the front, that's fine. If you'd rather stay in your seats, that's not a problem. How's everyone today?

[11 : 09] All fine. Let me hear your voices. You're very quiet these last few weeks. How are you today? Fine. Are you sure you're fine? You're fine. Good. You're fine. Tell me, what happened, if you've been listening so far you'll know, what happened here on Friday?

Hayley, you tell me. It was the wedding. It was the wedding. Whose wedding? Mary. It was Mary's wedding. And on Friday.

And on Friday. I think we've got some pictures on the screen. This is where everybody looks at Andrew. We're going to have some pictures on the screen.

If you just look on the screen now. If you just look on the screen now. There you go. There you go. You can be at ease.

I don't normally do this in a service. So you're not going to get photographed. But I did take a wee sneaky shot on Friday. And there's Mary and Dave.

[12 : 21] And there's Rona. And Angus. Kirstie's just out of the picture there. But on Friday, there was the big wedding. I think there's one more picture as well on the beach.

Maybe. But anyway, that's right. There's lots of... What kind of things happen on a wedding?

What kind of things do we expect to happen at a wedding? Yeah, do you want to worry? We get cake. You get cake. That's a very important thing.

You get cake. What other things happen at a wedding? Keep going. Tell me some of the things about weddings that come to your mind. Anna? Dancing. There's dancing, yes.

What other things happen? What other things do you think about when you think about a wedding? Help me out. Dress. There's a dress, yes. There's the dress.

[13 : 20] The wedding dress. And the bridesmaid's dresses. There's the cake. There's the... Music. There's music. Stress. Stress. There's the dress.

And there's the stress. That's why we don't normally open up to the congregation. The bridesmaids. Tell me, what do you think?

What do you think? There's all these things that happen. And there's lots of planning and stress and everything that goes into a wedding. When people think about it. What's the most important two words that are said on a wedding day?

Two words. And really they're the most important two words in the whole day. What do you think? Anna?

I do. I do. The minister stands and asks the question. And he'll say, do you take this woman to be your wife?

[14 : 30] Do you promise to love her and to be faithful and loyal to her for as long as you both shall live? And then the groom, the man, first of all, he says, I do.

If he didn't say, I do, there'd be no more wedding. He wouldn't be married. If he didn't say anything, they wouldn't be married.

And then I'll say the same to the bride. Do you take this man to be your husband? Do you promise to love him, be faithful and loyal to him for as long as you both shall live?

And she says, I do. These are the two most important words on a wedding day. Here's a question for you, all of you here, especially.

I'm a bit frightened asking you this question. Has anyone ever asked you to marry them yet? Have you ever been asked yet to be married?

[15 : 45] Can't hear you? No. No? You know, I want to tell you something. In a way, in a way, you kind of have.

You know, in a way, Jesus asks us to be married to him.

To come close to him. And he promises to be faithful to us. And he promises to be loyal to us. Think about the wedding vows.

And he promises to love us. And he went all the way to the cross to show us, didn't he? How much he loved us. And now what he says to you in the gospel message.

You listening? This is an important question. What he says to you is, will you take me to be your savior?

[16 : 46] Will you take me to be your lord? Will you take me to be your friend? And the most important words in your whole life will be the two words that I pray that you'll say.

And it's I do. Lord Jesus, I do. So will you say these words to Jesus? Let's pray now.

Lord God, we thank you for your love for us. We thank you for your faithfulness to us. We thank you for your loyalty to us. We thank you for the fact that we can remember and see how much you love us.

Every time you look at the cross. You went all the way there to take every sin away from us. Every barrier that stopped us from coming to know you.

You took away from us. So that we could come close to you. And as you call us, Lord, to trust you. We pray that we would say in our hearts and in our prayers.

[17 : 55] Lord, I do. Come into my life. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to be going through John's Gospel for some time now.

And I have reached the last section of chapter 20 today. So we'll read from verse 19 through to the end of the chapter. This is God's Word.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

After he had said this, he showed them his hands and sighed. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone whose sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

[18 : 53] 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.

But he said to them, Unless I see the nail marks on his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.

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.

Thomas said to him, My Lord and my God. Then Jesus told him, Because ye have seen me, ye have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.

[19 : 52] Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, ye may have life in his name.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. Callum, I believe, is now going to lead us in prayer in Gaelic. Callum?

Over there. Amen. Put two. Now going...

Thezes of Patra t■sse God willing s taht da the otros■ is very ni us four , educational services you don't have a right As for him in all that money has lāg heart there while saving lasz ivet your man now can ami us an idea The time A door sharing You, heel My Lord is speaking to you.

Jesus speaks to you like me. Please understand. Please make your heart more complicated.

[21 : 45] I am starving in a tank and spreadsheet. Please read them keywords.

He asks, He can refine that. Imagine our forest. Man is human .

Man can stick to their feet for their puesto. Man will act when they are in a place for them not to ■■■■■■■■.

From their left hand, the psi and tsi. are here Amen.

Amen. We're going to sing two verses now of Psalm 1 in Gaelic.

[23 : 29] We're looking today at Thomas, a man who walked astray for a period and he sinned in Psalm 1, the first two verses. That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way, sitteth in his scorers' chair, but placeth his delight upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.

Psalm 1, the first two verses of the psalm, with a man seated to sing in Gaelic. Sperm ich den Döneschön nachforscht in Kornje den Dönch.

Sperm ich den Dönch.

Pflöjisch. Sperm ich den Dönch. Sperm ich den Dönch. Sperm ich den Dönch.

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Satsang with Mooji Satsang with Mooji Satsang with Mooji Satsang with Mooji Satsang with Mooji Satsang with Mooji amongst us that you would work in us, that we would come to faith Lord in Christ if we have not yet believed and that we would draw closer to Jesus if we are those who are following him already. So hear our prayers and be glorified amongst us we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Today as I've indicated already it's something of a case study and the case has a name, his name is Thomas. So I want to just get straight into it and think about what we know about Thomas and hopefully, if time permits five really brief points on Thomas. We know first of all that he was a disciple the second thing that we know about Thomas is that he's known as the doubter. The third thing is we see him in this chapter of here into a state of disobedience.

The fourth point is we see Thomas as Jesus meets with him being disciplined, lovingly. And finally we'll reflect hopefully just in the final few words on the fact that Thomas becomes one who's dynamic. So first of all Thomas the disciple and we could go to Matthew's gospel or Mark's gospel or Luke's gospel and we'll see in all three of them that Thomas was very clearly a disciple of Jesus.

His name features in these three places. If we just look at, if we flick to Mark chapter 3 just for a moment. Mark chapter 3 and from verse 13 we see Jesus as he calls the disciples. Jesus went up on a mountainside and we know that he prayed there and he called to him those he wanted.

[30 : 23] And that's an important point to note. Those he wanted. And they came to him. He appointed twelve designating them apostles that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and have authority to drive out demons.

These are the twelve he appointed. Simon to whom he gave the name Peter. James son of Zebedee and his brother John. To them he gave the name the word Jeres which means sons of thunder.

Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas. Thomas. James son of Arthias, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Just that very simple point. The point that we note is that Jesus chose Thomas. Jesus wanted Thomas after that time of prayer before he called the disciples he determined that he wanted Thomas to be with them.

He wanted Thomas to be one of the group that he would send out. And for these three years as we read through the Gospels we see that Thomas was with Jesus.

[31 : 37] He was taught by Jesus. He walked close with Jesus. He went out in the name of Jesus. He was a disciple. And that's what you and I are called to.

Jesus is looking for people who will be his disciples. Those who will be with him. Those who will be sent out to do his work in his name.

I came across a quote this week on my phone that scanned across some social media. Kevin D. Young said this, Jesus isn't interested in fans or crowds.

He wants faith-filled disciples. He wants people who will respond day by day to his call to be with him, to seek him, to be in his word, to be in prayer, privately and corporately.

He's calling people who will be disciples to be in that place of worship. He's looking for people who will be willing to go out in his name to serve him and to tell others to pass on this wonderful message of the Gospel that Jesus came and Jesus lived and Jesus died and Jesus rose for us.

[33 : 09] And so the question, the first question in that location is, are you a disciple of Jesus? Are we disciples of Christ? We're actually quite of a big, quite part of a big crowd today.

But within the crowd, Jesus sees each individual. and are we disciples of Jesus? And if we're not, will we hear his call today to come to him and to trust him and to follow him and to serve him?

I think if you ask any Christian, they'll tell you that there is no fuller, better, more unpredictable, exciting, terrifying, peaceful, joyful, painful, purposeful life than being a disciple of Jesus.

And we're called to be disciples. Thomas, the disciple. Second point, Thomas, the doubter. And this is probably what Thomas is most famous for.

I think if we were to go out and ask people who knew nothing about the Bible, what can you tell me about Thomas? They might not even be able to tell us that he was a disciple, but they'll certainly tell us that he was a doubter.

[34 : 37] Even people who know nothing about the Bible will talk about doubting Thomases, those who are sceptical, those who are slow to believe or resistant to belief.

So is it fair to say that Thomas was a doubter? I think it probably is. And I wanted to take two examples of Thomas in action and see him where he's probably wrestling with doubts.

First is John 11, so head with me to John 11, John 11, and I guess we will know the account fairly well.

It's entitled in the NIV Bible here, The Death of Lazarus. So in this passage, we know the general plotline. Jesus gets word that his good friend Lazarus is sick, very sick, alarmingly sick, and Jesus, he delays two days before he determines that he will go and see Lazarus.

And during that two-day period where Jesus delays, the word comes through to Jesus that Lazarus is dead. but that doesn't stop Jesus.

[36 : 03] He still intends to go and see Lazarus in Bethany, even though to do so for Christ and the disciples was very dangerous and they'd found that in the past.

The Jews wanted him dead. They were plotting his death, looking for an opportunity to kill Jesus and those with him at this stage. So that's the background and we pick up the conversation here at verse 7.

Jesus said to his disciples, let us go back to Judea. But Rabbi, they said, a short while ago, the Jews tried to stone you and yet you're going back there?

Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours of daylight? The man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.

[37 : 04] Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he might not still sleep, so then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe, but let us go to him.

then Thomas, called Didymus, said to the rest of the disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him.

And that's Thomas. Jesus is just about to do something exciting, something glorious, something amazing. Jesus is just about to go and see Lazarus, and rise him from the dead as if he was just sleeping.

And yet Thomas was doubtful, he was bleak in his outlook, let's go and let's all die with him.

And yet what to note in this passage is these doubts, in this instance, they didn't cause Thomas to disobey Jesus.

[38 : 28] Have you ever thought about that? Thomas goes with Jesus to Bethany, and Thomas actually is the one who's used to call the other disciples, who are all sitting nervously at the side, come on, let's go.

Oh, let's go. Oh, let's go. And soon enough, Jesus addresses Thomas' doubts, he lifts his drooping chin up, and he gives him reason to be encouraged.

So that's the first instance of Thomas in doubt, the kind of bleak outlook that we can expect of him. The second is John 14.

We move on to John 14, another very familiar passage. And this is a passage where Jesus is speaking about heaven, as we know.

He's speaking about the glory of the place that he's going to, and he's speaking about the glory of what he was preparing for them. Jesus is speaking words of comfort and encouragement.

[39 : 38] He's exhorting his disciples who are alarmed by everything that Jesus was telling them. He's exhorting them to trust him and to be at peace. So, verse 1 of John 14, Jesus says, Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Trust in God. Trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms, many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I'm going there to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, so that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place for I am going. We can imagine the disciples and they're sitting around Jesus and Thomas is one of them.

And he's hearing what Jesus is saying, but he's not quite ready to believe. He's somewhat doubtful. doubtful. And so he asks Jesus the question.

Verse 5, Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? And then Jesus answers him with one of the greatest verses in all of scripture.

[40 : 55] Jesus answers doubting Thomas with one of the clearest teachings about salvation and the deity of Christ. Jesus answered verse 6, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

Aren't you thankful for dying Thomas? Aren't you thankful for Thomas' question, even though it was motivated by that doubt and that scepticism that was in his personality?

Without Thomas' question, we wouldn't have John 14, 6. So Thomas was a doubter.

I think that's fair to say. That was his nature. But the important point to note here is that not all doubt is sinful. some people are like Thomas.

[42 : 08] Some people here are like Thomas and tend to look not at the bright side of life, but they see all the potential problems and they see all the potential risks and they're quick to get discouraged and yet they still obey Jesus.

That's the point to know. Even with their risks and even with their worries and even with their kind of slightly bleak outlook on life, they still obey Jesus when he calls them to go to difficult places and calls them to do difficult things.

They may say with Thomas, if they're wrestling with God's call, this seems like a bad idea. I think we might crash and burn here, but Lord, if you're cruelly saying this to me, let's go.

I think this is a bad idea. I think I'm not fit for this, but because you're calling me, let's go.

That's the kind of spirit of Thomas, and yet there's faith in you, overcoming doubt. And then there's the people with questions, and questions, and questions.

[43 : 31] Some people don't ask too many questions, they just accept. Other people, they're very analytical, and they think everything through six steps down the line.

And they have many questions. questions. And they ask many questions. But the thing is, if we are such a person, as long as we address these questions to Jesus, as Thomas did, as long as we take our doubts and our questions and our struggles to Jesus and ask that he will help us and he'll answer us, we're not in sin.

in fact, very often there's great rich blessing in bringing our questions to the Lord and watching how he answers them.

So some of us can take great encouragement from Thomas, from his doubts, and all of us, I believe, have been blessed through the doubts that Thomas struggled with and yet Jesus helped him to navigate through.

So Thomas was a disciple, chosen of Jesus, called of Jesus, and yet Thomas was a doubter by nature.

[45 : 04] Third point, Thomas was disobedient. Not all doubt is sin, I think that's the thrust of our last point, but some doubt is sin.

Some doubt is sinful. And in this passage, John 20, that we're in, I think we see Thomas in a state of sinful doubt.

And I've got two reasons for saying that. The first thing we see is, absence, and the second thing we have here is, we hear his admission. So first of all, Thomas' absence.

Verse 24 of John 20, where are now. Now Thomas called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. Thomas was absent.

The other disciples were present, they were there, they were gathered together, where's Thomas? He's not here.

[46 : 13] We were expecting him, but he's not here. And I don't want to read too much of this, because we don't know the reasons why Thomas was absent. We're not told why he was absent, we're just told he was absent.

My guess is, the disciples were together just trying to come to terms with and understand what was going on in their lives. Especially as these reports came in of Jesus being resurrected, of Jesus being alive, they needed the encouragement of being together.

And their Lord had taught them for these three years the importance of why they should be together in his name. But Thomas wasn't there.

And that indicates that Thomas was allowing the doubts that he struggled with to prevail and take him into a place of spiritual despair and isolation.

Reading Matthew, not Matthew Henry, but William Hendricks in the commentator this morning, he says this, Thomas should have been there.

[47 : 29] By not being present, he had missed the joy of seeing the risen Lord and of hearing him speak words of peace. Indeed, he had missed the peace itself.

It is evident that he had no peace, verse 25. He was wretched, nervous, and restless. We should pray today for some, not who are here, but who are not here.

We don't know why they're not here, but some of them may be in that state today of nervousness and restlessness.

no peace with a sense of their sin and the wretchedness that that sin brings.

Thomas was absent. He's in a bad place, likely. He was absent. And from this we can take the negative or the opposite encouragement of the need to be together.

[48 : 47] The commentary that we have very clearly in this passage is Hebrews 10. Think about these verses in contrast with Thomas' absence.

Hebrews 10, let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful and let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another. Christianity is not about just you.

It's not about just me. It's about us. We consider one another. We pray for one another.

We support one another. We sometimes call one another into a place of correction when we see a drift. We'll talk about that tonight. Thomas is discouraged and his absence is taking him beyond doubt and into disobedience.

[50 : 00] grace. And the more we have sent ourselves from church, the more we have sent ourselves from the place of prayer when we have opportunity to be there, the more we distance ourselves from other Christians, the colder, the harder our hearts get.

And the more our doubts that we struggle with, they mutate into just plain sinful disobedience.

Thomas was absent. The second thing that we see here under the disobedience of Thomas is, we hear his admission.

The disciples, they met with Jesus when Thomas wasn't there and they eagerly, verse 25, tell Thomas the good news. The other disciples told him, we've seen the Lord.

How did that happen? I think even there's a wee lesson there. My guess is they hunted down Thomas, wherever he was, they went to him and they found him and they witnessed him and said, Thomas, you weren't there, but you need to know this.

[51 : 21] Jesus is alive. He came, we saw him, he spoke to us. We have seen the Lord, verse 25. So what does Thomas say? Does he say, that's wonderful, that's amazing, I'm so full of joy, I'm so encouraged.

Well, that's not what he says at all. He says 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.

believe it. It's a double negative in a week. I definitely will not believe it. I know you ten reliable men are all telling me the same thing, but I will not believe it.

And the words that underline there are will not. Thomas says I will not believe it. Not I'm struggling to believe this.

Not please help me overcome these waves of unbelief that are crashing in on me again. But his heart is hard.

[52 : 36] And he says I will not believe. And you know there's a battle going on in the will and the might.

Of every person in this room. The will is the war zone. It's a place where we can exercise either faith or unbelief.

And God has given us the dignity of having free will. He's given us that responsibility of being able to determine whether or not we will trust him or whether we will decide not to trust him.

Whether we will obey him or whether we will not. And Thomas was determined here that he will not believe.

and we might shake our heads at Thomas and say how could he? And yet John turns the spotlight on us.

[53 : 53] He says before you get too judgmental, before you get hard on Thomas, remember this, verse 30, Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written, says John, you want to know why I wrote the gospel? 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.

John says my whole purpose in writing this is so that you may believe. so the question is will you? Will you believe?

Or will you determine with Thomas to disobey? Thomas the disciple, Thomas the doubter, Thomas the disobedient, fourthly, Thomas the disciplined.

I think if we were writing a spiritual novel, if this was speculative, it would end at this point and Thomas would be struck off the castles.

[55 : 14] He's been through so much, he's had so much blessing, he's got so many witnesses testifying to the fact that Jesus, everything he promised was true, and yet he stamps his feet and he says, I will not believe.

I am a professing, settled, non-believer, man, leave me alone. And that's probably where we would expect a full stop to be if this was a spiritual novel, but this is not a spiritual novel, this is the truth.

This is the way that God deals with people, not the way that we would deal with people. And the story doesn't end here. See, Jesus knew Thomas.

He knew about all his questions, he knew about his sort of negative, pessimistic mind at times. He knew about the complicated thought processes that made up this man, and yet still he loved him, and still he wanted him, and still he had chosen him, and now he comes to him.

Verse 26, a week later, his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. that brought a wee smile to my face. He's there now.

[56 : 33] He was absent last time, but he's present now. For all Thomas' protestations about his non-belief, he still seems to be drawn to the Lord's people. He still seems to be drawn to the place where God's word is, because God still had a hold him.

Thomas was with them. Verse 26, so the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you. Thomas probably didn't feel that much peace in that moment.

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. Listen to the contrast, not the contrast, but listen to how carefully Jesus addresses Thomas' doubts.

Thomas says, unless I see the nail marks in his hands, Jesus says, put your finger here, see my hands.

[57 : 51] unless I put my hand into his side, Jesus says, reach out your hand and put it into my side.

Stop doubting and believe. And that was a word of biting and yet loving discipline to Thomas, and how convicted he must have felt as he suddenly realized that every word that he had said in disobedience and doubt, Jesus had heard.

Everything that he said about his hands and his side, Jesus had heard as he spoke it. And Jesus still hears and hurts when we turn away from him and when we will not trust him and when we will not obey him and when we remain silent rather than speaking a word for him and when we pass up the opportunities to bless the faith and the hope that's in us, Jesus sees that situation.

He hears our words when we shouldn't speak them. He hears the deafening silence when we should fill it. He knows about our doubts.

He knows when we don't allow him to deal with our doubts. He knows when we allow our doubts to mutate into that ugly sinful disobedience and yet still he comes to us today and he says to us, stop doubting.

[59 : 35] doubt and believe. Is anyone hearing that today? Stop doubting and believe.

And if we're hearing it, how will we respond to the love and discipline of Christ today? Stop doubting and believe. how to respond to this?

Thomas actually teaches us how we have to respond correctly. Thomas teaches us how to respond in such a way that takes us into right relationship with Jesus.

Thomas teaches us how to respond in such a way as to ensure salvation and ensure restoration if we are those who have backslidden. God and the response here doesn't involve ten years hard labour.

It doesn't involve spiritual imprisonment. It doesn't involve us being punished for our sinful doubts and disobedience because we see in this passage that Jesus was punished for our sinful doubts and our disobedience.

[61 : 02] We see his hands. We see his side. When Thomas saw that his doubts lifted as he repented of his disobedience and he prayed simply my Lord and my God.

And maybe that's the simple prayer for some of us today. as Jesus comes to us, as he comes back to us, will we say my Lord and my God.

Thomas, the disciple, the doctor, disobedient, and yet he's disciplined, he's restored. And finally, and this is honestly just a word.

Thomas, the dynamic. And we don't actually find this very clearly in Scripture, but we can't help but ask the question, how did things go with Thomas?

What happened to him? We know about his doubts, we know about his sin, we know about his struggles, but what happened after this? After he professes his faith, does he persevere?

[62 : 25] Does he continue? Is he bright? Or is he someone who just makes a hash of that again and again and again? We don't know too much from Scripture, but we know that in Acts chapter 1, as Jesus ascends from earth into heaven, Thomas was there.

there. And we know at Pentecost, Thomas was likely there.

But the historical documents tell us that after Pentecost, Thomas left Jerusalem. He never went back.

So what did he do? Well, he went to Syria. He planted churches there. And once they were established, he took off again.

He started walking. And he reached India. He planted churches there. And once they were established, he set off again.

[63 : 40] and he reached as far as China. And he planted churches there. And the evidence of these churches we can still find in all these places.

So Thomas truly did stop doubting. And he did believe. And through him, many others were brought to faith also.

maybe even someone today, here, might be brought to faith. Or back to a place of restoration.

As we think about Thomas. And his doubts that were addressed. And his faith, which was bolstered.

Let's pray. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

[64 : 51] And we thank you that as we look at the disciples, we see men who are flawed and who are sinful and who sometimes make a mess of it.

And yet, we thank you that these mistakes and these sins and these struggles are all recorded for us in scripture. Nothing is airbrushed out. And we thank you that we are encouraged today, even as we think about Thomas, as we look at ourselves and see elements of Thomas in our own minds, in our own hearts, we pray, Lord, that we would be encouraged by him and that we would say with him, my Lord and my God.

And Lord, that you would use us for your glory as we believe that you used Thomas, and as we pray that you may be using him even still today. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all, both now and forevermore.

Amen.