

## We All Have Our Doubts

On this Sunday, some 2000 years ago, Jesus appeared to the disciples for the second time. But for Thomas, it was his first time seeing Jesus alive. Remember on Easter Sunday Mary Magdalene and Peter and John and possibly two other disciples had seen Jesus alive. So they must have called a meeting that evening to talk about what they had seen and to decide what to do. For some reason Thomas was not at that meeting. It is possible that he got the message that Jesus was alive but didn't believe it. It is possible that Thomas didn't get the message and missed the meeting. It is also possible that Thomas could not accept the fact that things were changing for him and he wanted to ***just keep things the same***. Jesus was dead, he could understand that—but believing that someone could come back from the dead was another story and it would take more than rumors to change his mind. In any case, he wasn't there to see Jesus for himself, and during the week that followed, when he heard that Jesus had been there, he still didn't believe it. He was skeptical and needed more proof. It is interesting that the following Sunday evening when the disciples were meeting, this time Thomas was there. Had he been persuaded to come? Had he come out of respect for his dead teacher and to comfort his friends who out of grief were apparently hallucinating? We just don't know why Thomas missed the first meeting, but came to the second. In any case there he was and suddenly there was Jesus focusing on Thomas, and saying, "Here, touch my hands and me feet, put your hand in my side...do not doubt but believe." For Thomas seeing was believing. But if seeing is believing, then what is faith? Faith is believing while not seeing. And Jesus puts

those with faith in a special category—Blessed are those who have not seen and yet come to believe. Folks he was talking about us. I believe that Jesus Christ is alive in me through the Holy Spirit, not because I have seen him, but because I have seen my hands do his work—I have been with people who needed to know that Jesus was there and somehow he was there...I didn't see him, but I saw people comforted by his presence. I believe in Jesus Christ even though I have not seen him. Can you say that too? I hope you can and I hope you will, because this is what we are supposed to do.

This church, the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968. Over the past 48 years instead of growing membership has declined. I think the initial decline came because some people just did not want to change the name of the church they belonged to—like Thomas they did not accept that things had changed and could not believe that something new had happened.

This building in which we are worshipping was built years ago as a Methodist Episcopal Church. We are sitting here today worshipping in the sanctuary of a United Methodist Church. But what has changed? Only the name has changed. The bricks and mortar and the basic beliefs are the same. But each time there was a change here; some people left and never came back. They doubted, like Thomas. My old Church is dead, the new church is not my old church, and so I'm not going back. But they unlike Thomas they never had their doubt removed by Jesus. They left and never came back even after they heard that the new church was as good as or better than the old one. What if Thomas just never believed what the other disciples told him? What if he never met with them again? He would have never seen Jesus. His doubts would

have remained and someone else would have had to take the Gospel to the places that Thomas took it. We wouldn't even be talking about Thomas or maybe we would but it would be in the same way we talk about Judas. Fortunately Thomas did believe what the other disciples told him and he came to be with them. Then Jesus came to him and removed his doubt.

Do you know people who have left this church? Do you know people who don't go to church at all? Will you talk to them and tell them that Jesus is alive and well and he comes to be with us every Sunday to remove our doubts? We can't see Jesus ourselves, but we can believe that Jesus is alive in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. I hope that those who have left this church over the years found the faith they lacked in another church somewhere. I hope that when change comes in the future, you will accept it, and remember that Jesus comes here every Sunday to be with believers –not because they have a certain name, or pray a certain way—but because even though you have doubts, you believe without seeing. Thomas wasn't sure what he believed but he met with the disciples anyway, and Jesus came and took his doubt away.

Jesus will do the same thing for you. He won't actually appear to you like he did Thomas but today Jesus sends his Holy Spirit to those who believe without seeing, your doubts will be removed and your faith will be strengthened. You will have hope, and you will believe. When we walk with the Lord, in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way. While we do his good will, he abides with us still and with all who will Trust and Obey. Trust and Obey for there's no better way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey.