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Poor Thomas. He missed church on Easter. He was not there in the upper room that first Easter evening when the Lord Jesus appeared to his fearful band of disciples who were cowering behind locked doors. Jesus simply appeared among them without so much as a knock on the door and said, "Peace with you." And after they collected their wits, he showed them His hands and his sides, still bearing the wounds of the cross.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you." And He breathed on them and spoke to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." In so doing, Jesus guaranteed that his voice is heard in his Church until he returns in glory. They had seen the risen Lord with their own eyes. They had seen the nail marks in his hands, the spear mark in his side. No question about what they were seeing. They felt his breath. They heard his words. Wouldn't you have loved to be among them in that upper room? To see what they saw? To hear what they heard? How much easier it would be to believe! Or so we imagine.

Thomas Didymus, the Twin, was not with them that first Easter evening when Jesus appeared to them. Why, we aren't told. Perhaps out of fear, he had run away and was hiding. The rest were in a locked room, after all, out of fear of the authorities. Perhaps he was with his twin. Maybe he was disillusioned. He'd left all to follow Jesus, and now the movement was in shambles, the leader crucified, the cause lost. Whatever the reason, Thomas was not there to see and to hear.

The others caught up with him sometime during the week. "We have seen the Lord," they said. But like the others on Easter morning, Thomas also knew by his own experience that dead men don't rise, ordinarily. And like the others, he doesn't initially believe the news. He was skeptical. He wanted proof, hard evidence that Jesus truly is risen from the dead, that it's the same Jesus and not some impostor. He wanted to see the wounds. He wanted to touch 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."

You see, Thomas wasn't some ignorant, gullible, superstitious first century country bumpkin who would believe every rumour that came along. He heard the news from his trusted friends, his fellow disciples. He had been there when Jesus predicted his own death and resurrection three times. He'd heard it with his own ears. But still, he did not believe it.

Thank God for Thomas! He brings veracity to John's Gospel account. Think about it. If you were making this up to deceive future generations, if you were writing some sort of myth or legend about a resurrected Jesus, would you have his own inner core of disciples doubting his word, questioning the good news, seeking evidence? No, of course not. You would have Thomas hearing the news that they had seen the Lord and cry out, "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!" But that's not what happened. Thomas did not believe it, even when it was told to him on good authority. And he refused to believe it until he personally saw and touched the risen Lord.

A week later, they again were in the upper room. Do you notice how Jesus seems to keep popping up on Sundays in the Gospel of John? And it's always in closed gatherings? There's a pattern shaping up here. "Whenever two or three are gathered in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." He's present with his gathered Church. His Body, his Blood, the wounds of his sacrifice. His peace and forgiveness and Spirit and breath. All here for you. This is the foundation of Christian worship and liturgy. The only difference between that room and this room is that our doors aren't locked and we can't see Jesus quite as plainly as they did. But here are the same wounds and words and Spirit and body and blood of Jesus and forgiveness.

Thomas was with them this time. Good for Thomas. He'd missed out on everything the Sunday before. See what happens when you miss church? Thomas is there, doubts and all. That tells us something. Bring your doubts to Jesus. There will always be doubts on our minds. We're dealing with things unseen, things you can't measure scientifically. There will always be doubts. Sometimes little nagging ones, sometimes big ones. All the great ones of faith had their doubts. Abraham and Sarah laughed at the promise of God that they would have children in their old age, until God had the last laugh. Zechariah didn't believe the news from the angel that he and Elizabeth would conceive in their old age and bear a son name John.

Mary wondered how it could be that she would conceive and bear a son.

What we learn from Thomas this morning is to bring all our questions and doubts to church, to the altar and pulpit, to the words and wounds of Jesus. And Jesus will meet us, questions, doubts and all.

So there is Jesus again, standing among them in a locked room. Again his peace. And now he speaks to Thomas as though he had heard him days before because he had. “Put your finger here; put out your hand, and place it in my side.” This is a genuine body we are talking about here. Not a ghost, not a spirit, not an apparition. He’s touchable. And the wounds are the clincher. The wounds of his sacrifice are still visible in resurrection.

What does that mean? “By His wounds, we are healed.” Those are the wounds that mark him as the Lamb who was slain. And curiously, though he is risen from the dead, the wounds remain as battle scars. Even seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, Jesus bears the scars of his sacrifice as an eternal reminder of your forgiveness. When he intercedes for you and mediates for you, he does it on the basis of his sacrifice. As the hymn says it,

Crown Him the Lord of love
Behold his hands and side,
Rich wounds, yet visible above,
In beauty glorified.

With Jesus wounds come also his words. Faith creating, faith enlivening, faith sustaining words. “Do not disbelieve, but believe.” And Thomas does. He confesses what he believes, “My Lord and my God.” Curiously, there is no account of Thomas having touched the wounds of Jesus. Like us, he hears the words of Jesus, and believes.

And now a blessing, not on Thomas, but on you and me, we who have heard and not seen, and yet believe, are blessed by God. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Blessed are you, this second Sunday of Easter, that you believe that Christ is risen from the dead, and that His death and life are yours. God has not left you without evidence. No, you may not see and touch Jesus’ hands and feet and side. But you have the sworn deposition of an eyewitness: “These things 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.”

That's where we go with our doubts – to the Lord gathered amongst his Church. We, like Thomas, are prone to doubt. We live in a scientific and skeptical age. We know that dead men don't rise, ordinarily. And yet over and against our doubts, God sets His Word, the historic record of eyewitnesses to the resurrection, the sworn testimony of those who had seen and heard and touched. We are, of all people, blessed. No, we don't see, but we hear and we take and we eat and drink, and we are as much in the presence of the risen Jesus as Thomas and the rest of them were.

Blessed are you, dear baptized believer, for you have not seen and yet by God's gift and grace you believe. And believing you have life in name of Jesus.

Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.