

John 20:24-29

The Jesus the World Needs

Have you given considerable thought to the claims of Christianity? Many no doubt are here like me and were raised in church all of your life. There have been more days where I have been in church than days when I have not been in church. I can remember the moment that I believed as a six year old, the moment that I was baptized some time after. But there may be some in here whose testimony is not like this one that I am describing to you. You were not raised in church, you grew up disbelieving or maybe believing in something else. You may be here this morning and still wrestle with the claims of Christianity. I can understand. I will never forget the time that this church boy who attended a Bible college for the first 2 years of his college education went to finish his education in a university where he sat in the class of a philosophy professor who challenged everything that he believed. I will never forget the first time that I was in an environment where people would look at me and say, "Do you really believe that?"

The claims of Christianity are revolutionary, are life altering. Think about this day, this Easter Sunday. On this day we come together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, God in the flesh, from the dead. Pretty incredible! Has anyone here ever been to a funeral? Has anyone here ever met someone whose funeral you attended alive 3 days later? Pretty incredible! This is the claim of Christianity that Jesus was crucified, died, was buried, and three days later rose from the dead.

Sounds easier to just be a good idea, a fairytale that we tell ourselves. But the world doesn't need another fairy tale, and Christianity is no fairy tale, Christ coming from the grave is a historical fact. It is an event that occurred in time that is a non repeatable event.

There some of you listening say - fact? Yes fact. Historical fact. What is a historical fact? A historical fact is an event that occurred that is unrepeatable. Lincoln giving the Gettysburg Address is a historical fact. Lincoln could never give the speech twice. He could say the same words twice but could never be in the same train car writing the speech before it was given ever again! Jesus rose again, and we have the recorded testimony of that resurrection in our hands today - Holy Scripture.

Today I want us to turn to one of those instances where Jesus appeared to his disciples with convincing proofs - John 20:24-29.

Read Text

Maybe as we read this, for those of us who have grown up near this story, we see someone that we know, one that is called (unfortunately) today "Doubting Thomas." Scripture doesn't call him this, he is simply called "Thomas, one of the Twelve, called Didymus." But in this interaction with the resurrected Jesus, we learn what kind of Jesus the world needs. The world, desperate for hope, needs true hope, not just another story to such our children in with at night but a story to build our lives upon - the resurrected Jesus is that story.

So today, on this Easter Sunday in the year of our Lord 2016, 3 truths about the Jesus the world needs:

1. The World Needs a Reasonable Jesus (24-25)

Far too long we have separated faith and reason. There has been a war and still is a way between the faculties of our mind and the founting of our heart. Do you see how futile this is? Without the heart, the mind is of no use and the same is true for the heart without the mind. For far too long Christians have allowed the sciences and education to push the Lord of Creation to the edges treating theology like it belongs in some shy corner instead of letting theology (the study of God) be the way that we interpret what is seen. Man has never felt so alone in the universe than when he takes his Creator and as Nietzsche suggested, in his *Parable of the Madman* (1882), *God is dead. We have killed him - you and I. All of us are his murders.* This mode of thought, removing man from his founding stone, in the 19th Century, led to the bloodiest century of all other centuries combined - the 20th Century!

The old church used to say that all truth is God's truth, now modern men have instead of seeing the wonders of God in their microscopes observe the wonders of something else, anything else, but never could they be thinking God's thoughts after him as they explore the universe that he created! They use the faculties that God gave them to deny him. C.S. Lewis, the atheist turned Christian apologist captured it nicely when he said, *I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but by it I see everything else.* G. K. Chesterton, the English writer and apologist said something similar when he said, *A man is not really convinced of a philosophic theory when he finds that something proves it. He is only really convinced when he finds that everything proves it.*

This is no time for retreat, this is a time for engagement. A time for us as the Church to bear witness of the resurrection. The church today must reclaim the ground that modernity has dared to take by declaring with the theologian and Prime Minister of the Netherlands at the turn of the 20th century, Abraham Kuyper, *Oh, no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ does not cry: Mine!* (1880 *Inaugural Lecture*, Free University of Amsterdam). Our view of Christ must be this encompassing, it must touch every aspect of our lives! How do we do this? By taking every thought captive and placing it under the obedience of Christ. What does this mean? We live as Christians. Not as Christian business men, or Christian moms, but as Christians who are business men, Christians who are moms. The norm in our life must be learning what it means to be Christian - learning to worship, letting our lives be a hymn of praise to this God who has saved us and made us his own by the sealing of the Spirit.

This is why many disbelieve. The resurrection is such a glorious and life altering truth. The disbelief of the world does not do damage to the truth of the Resurrection. Jesus is able to withstand any threats against his resurrection, especially unbelief.

Remember that Thomas was not the only who had doubted. It took Peter to see the empty tomb and touch the grave clothes before he believed (v.8). The same God who created a rational mind came to his disciples and, as Luke tells us in Acts, *[He] presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God* (Acts 1:3). We too say with Thomas that unless these hand that received the nails and the side that received a spear is available we dare not believe. As Paul said about the resurrection to the Church at Corinth, *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you*

are still in your sins, and, If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:17, 19).

Thomas is expressing a cry of his heart, a cry that Jesus does not dismiss. Jesus must be alive, really alive.

2. The World Needs a Jesus to Worship (26-28)

We don't need an idol erected in our own minds, we need the Lord of Creation coming to us in the likeness of sinful flesh, living a perfect life, healing the sick, raising the dead, dying for sinful men, and himself rising from the dead with the dawn of Easter morning! As N.T. Wright says, *We could cope - the world could cope - with a Jesus who ultimately remains a wonderful idea inside his disciple's minds and hearts. The world cannot cope with a Jesus who comes out of the tomb, who inaugurates God's new creation right in the middle of the old one (Surprised by Scripture, 60).*

Be quiet about your faith, the world says. But we know that when they say that they say it with the breath of unbelief. How can we be silent? We, like the Apostles before the council, have truth burning us from the inside out, and so we say, *we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20)*. The world wants to keep us quiet and to think that what we speak when we speak about the resurrection is church talk. But this is not church talk, this is the way that God has begun to bring the days of darkness to their dusk while the morning star raises a light in our hearts that will soon spill into every crevice of creation. This morning star has risen when Christ rose from his grave! This the Jesus that the world needs, a Jesus where men come to the end of themselves and are left with only this reaction, the reaction of Thomas, the most appropriate and richly developed reactions in all of Holy Text: *My Lord and my God!*

Him, this Jesus who said, put your finger here, do not disbelieve but believe, is the one that we proclaim to the world. When we proclaim him it is as if Christ was making his appeal through us. Because of this, we go to the dark corners of the world. Realizing that his light will soon shine, we say with bold assurance to all of creation, *be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:11ff)*

Look at the way that Jesus appeared. Jesus appeared to his disciples behind locked doors. There are no locked doors for the resurrected Christ. We go to every place, in his authority, seeing Satan fall like lightning from heaven. This resurrected Jesus is the one who has given us *authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:18-19)*. Jesus comes to them and declares Peace to them. This peace is a peace that has been won for us! We know that even though we may have trouble in this world we have a champion of peace who has overcome the world! (John 16:33)

Does this sound to good to be true? This is why you must believe.

3. The World Needs a Jesus Who Blesses Those Who Haven't Seen Yet Believe (29)

Jesus says these words to Thomas not for Thomas but for us. Jesus is not so much scolding Thomas as he is assuring us. John is writing as the last of the Apostles at this time, and the Holy Spirit is communicating something through him - *Blessed are those who have not seen and*

yet have believed. Look at verse 30 and 31. Why were these things written? So that we may believe.

Paul says in Romans that *faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ* (Rom 10:17). We believe now because we have heard, and Jesus says we are blessed!

Is this you?

The Apostle Peter, the Rock whose confession is the foundation of the Church, writing to a group of Christians undergoing persecution in Asia whose belief is based upon an eye witness testimony of forgiveness of sins through the resurrected Jesus says:

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9)

Do you believe even though you have not seen? You have heard. Do you believe? This Jesus is the Jesus you need, but you must believe.