

Sunday Thought

11th April 2021 Second Sunday of Easter

Readings

Acts 4: 32 - 35

Psalm 133

1 John 1:1 - 2:2

John 20: 19 - 31

Believing Thomas !



Obituaries usually pay tribute to the best things about a person's life. Tributes, like gossip, however will often use selective memory and give only half a story. How sad, though when someone is remembered or judged by the memory of one personal failure. It seems that may be true in the case of disciple Thomas. For two thousand years he has been known as '*doubting Thomas*' when just the reverse is really the true story. In his gospel record John gives us an account of the deepest, most awe-inspired moment of faith as Thomas kneels before cross-scarred Jesus and cries – *My Lord! My God! I believe!*

Of course, Thomas was no stranger to doubt. Are any of us? Nor was he afraid to express his doubts. Just a couple of weeks before this event in the Jerusalem Upper Room, he had declared his willingness to go with Jesus to help Lazarus who was dying, even though others, fearful of the Jewish authorities and mindful of Jesus' warning of the impending horrors of his passion and death, advised against visiting the city at that time.

Perhaps John included that comment about Lazarus in his story to prepare us for the moment of Thomas' faith disclosure in the upper room. He crafts the incidents to give us this picture of him first being absent when Jesus appeared to the rest of his followers and of his obstinate refusal to believe unless he could see what the others had seen. It was to rise to a climax when Jesus came the second time. John makes his point, going on to write of how the whole world is waiting to receive the good news and how it will be just like this, again and again as people determine to turn their lives around, believe in Jesus, share the life of his spirit and affirm before him... '*My Lord! My God!*' He seals this with the authority of Jesus' own words to Thomas – '*Blessed are those who believe without these physical proofs, but just on the testimony of my disciples' words and lives. They will know me as you do in just the way that they find convincing.*

The truth of Thomas' doubting hangs on one word. He did not say, as we often hear others say, and maybe ourselves too, *I can't believe*. He said *I won't believe* – *except on my terms!* 'Unless I SEE for myself.' My own experience of doubt and of many long conversations with other doubters makes me wonder if Thomas had personal reasons for not believing without proof. Like those who feel God has let them down through personal loss or unanswered prayer. Maybe Thomas who had a tendency to need authenticated stories, felt piqued. After all, why was he left out when Jesus first came? Couldn't the Lord have waited till they were all together and Thomas returned from whatever he was doing. Then, of course, like the others he had so many inconsistencies to mull over - the hoped-for King expressing his sovereignty from a donkey ... through agonising tears ... nailed, helpless on a cross ... It wasn't easy to believe in victory and resurrection!

For me the heart of this story is the wonderful grace of Jesus and God's faith in unbelievers! The Lord came again that night just for Thomas. He gave the doubter the actual credentials he'd asked for the week before. The Master's answer to a disciple's doubts was not another theological treatise but himself – the Risen Jesus!

I pray our reflection this week after Easter may make us more sure of our faith in Jesus and able to re-affirm with Thomas, 'Jesus is MY Lord! My God. I do Believe!'

A Prayer [with 1 John 1 – 2:2 in mind]

Christ is risen! Jesus is Lord!

Lord Jesus

By your Cross and Resurrection

You have brought a new springtime to our winterly world.

May the light of your living presence

reach into every part of us,

inspiring us to devout belief;

to pure living;

to deeper fellowship with you

and with all other believers;

and to faithful witness to the Gospel.

Good news! Jesus is alive – for me - for us!

