

Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-up Notes
April 21, 2024
Rev. Dr. Andrew Keuer

Sermon Text for Easter 4: John 20:24-29

Title: “Thomas’ Doubt” / Series: “Things He Heals”

Core Observations of the Texts

- 1. Rumors!** The English language has two words that arise from the same old English root word – gospel and gossip. The difference, of course, is that one spreads good news and the other not so good! In this text, Thomas is hearing gospel, good rumors, that Jesus is alive. But he wants more...
- 2. The importance of faith:** As a whole, the Christian world has given Thomas a bit of a hard time for wanting to move beyond rumors. Jesus Himself charges Thomas to press beyond unbelief (20.27, “stop doubting and believe”); and Jesus shows up to ensure that Thomas can do just that, thereby fulfilling what He had promised in John 6.29. Jesus’ closing blessing (20.29) shows that Thomas is a model of the pursuit of faith for all who come after him but that their encounter with Christ will be different than Thomas’ encounter.
- 3. Aspects of faith:** If we look at the three appearances of Thomas in John’s Gospel, we can discern three aspects of faith. Thomas is strong in two aspects and weak in the third. First, in John 11, Jesus announces to his disciples that their friend Lazarus has died. Thomas interjects at verse 16 and says “Let us also go, that we may die with him!” Here Thomas shows his deep loyalty to Christ. Second, in chapter 14 at the Last Supper, Jesus tells the disciples that they know the way that He will go to the Father after His death. Again, Thomas interjects in verse 5, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going or the way there.” The “we” is important here – Thomas is not only concerned to be with Jesus in heaven but is interested in all the disciples being there together. In the sermon, this was called ‘the discipleship bond’.
- 4. The third dimension of faith:** The third dimension is John 20:24-29. Thomas lacks an understanding of what Jesus’ resurrection entailed. Could the body of Christ truly withstand Thomas shoving his finger into the pierce marks and jamming his hand into Christ’s side-wound? Thomas needs to see for himself and to test it out, so that he knows what to believe and proclaim.

Questions to Ponder

- 1. Excluded!** What did you think of the claim in the sermon that we live in a “Thomas moment”, where direct experiences of God are less the norm than they were in the past?
- 2. Thomas, a model?** Do you agree that perhaps we have been too hard on Thomas? In what ways is Thomas an example of faith, rather than a doubting failure? Which of the three aspects of Thomas’ faith do you desire to see God strengthen?
- 3. “Second wind Christianity”** The sermon referenced Tomas Halik’s phrase “second wind Christianity” to describe those who come to faith, stay away, but then return with a greater intensity ad depth. Have you observed this phenomenon in yourself or those close to you?

References: Peter Berger, *Rumors of Angels*. Tomas Halik, *Night of the Confessor*.