

“I’ll believe it when I see it.” People usually say that when the source is not trustworthy. But if the source is God, who is completely trustworthy and reliable, then we should say, “I believe it even if I don’t see it.” Today, Jesus says to Thomas and to us:

**Stop Doubting and Believe!**

- I. **Jesus comes to us you with his peace.**
- II. **Jesus sends you on a mission.**

First, **Stop doubting and believe! Jesus comes to you with his peace.** The Gospel for today begins, **“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” (John 20:19)** I can’t imagine the mixture of emotions that the disciples experienced that first Easter day. They started the day with sadness because they thought that Jesus was dead. Our passage says they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. And then reports were coming in that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The women at the tomb, Peter, and the two Emmaus disciples all reported that they had seen the risen Jesus. With all of these reports of the risen Jesus, there was excitement mixed with disbelief. That’s quite a range of emotions for one day: sadness, fear, excitement, disbelief. Into this mixture of emotions steps Jesus and the emotion that Jesus wanted them to have on that first Easter Sunday was *peace*. It says, **“Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” (John 20:19b)** Do you ever feel like the disciples? Do you ever feel like your life is a mixture of sadness and fear and excitement and disbelief? Today through his word Jesus steps into that mixture of emotions in your life and says **“Peace be with you.”** One commentator said that **“Peace be with you”** on Easter Sunday is the compliment of **“It is finished”** on Good Friday.<sup>1</sup> Your sins have been paid for, every one of them. Because **“It is finished”** you can have peace. And joy flows from the peace which Jesus gives us. It says, **“After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20:20).** On the night before he died, Jesus had promised to come back and give his disciples lasting joy. He said, **“You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ... I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:20, 22).** We might say, “Well, if I had been there to see the risen the Jesus, then I would have great peace and joy.” But the Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 1, **“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9).** We have peace and joy because even though we have not seen it, Christ has risen to give us salvation.<sup>2</sup>

But our Gospel tells us about one of the disciples who refused to believe unless he first saw and touched the risen Jesus. Thomas was not there when Jesus had appeared to the disciples. And when the disciples told him about it, he said, **“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25b).** Notice that Thomas’ stated requirements include not only seeing Jesus, but also touching his wounds. He wants double confirmation: both seeing him and touching his wounds. And he emphatically says that he will not believe unless he gets this double confirmation. But Jesus shows grace by coming to Thomas and giving him the confirmation he was looking for!<sup>3</sup> And this shows that still today Jesus has love for those who struggle with doubt. It says, **“A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’”** The he said to Thomas, **“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” (John 20:26-27).** Notice that Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, 379. This sermon also contains insights drawn from D.A. Carson, *John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary; Leon Morris, *John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament; Johannes Ylvisaker, *The Gospels*, and R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John’s Gospel*.

<sup>2</sup> I owe this thought to Raymond Brown, *John*, Anchor Bible 29A, 1049.

<sup>3</sup> I owe this thought to John Chrysostom’s sermon on this passage.



repeats Thomas' words back to him. This shows that Jesus was there when Thomas had said those things. He said, "Surely I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). Thomas responds by worshiping Jesus. As skeptical as Thomas was before, Thomas now gives an amazing confession of faith: **"Thomas said to him: 'My Lord and my God.'" (John 20:28)**. This is one of the Bible passages that tells us that Jesus is God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. John began his Gospel by saying that Jesus is God. He said, **"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:1, 14)**. And towards the end of John's Gospel, Thomas calls Jesus, **"My Lord and my God" (John 20:28)**. Notice that Thomas says "my" twice. "*My* Lord and *my* God." That shows Thomas' heart of faith. It's like in "I Know that My Redeemer Lives": "He lives *my* Jesus still the same." Cling to Jesus which that same heart of faith that Thomas now has. Do we ever have doubts? Sure. Every Christian has doubts sometimes. But remember what Jesus said to Thomas, **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29b)**. We have not seen Jesus, but John did and he says that he wrote down what he saw so that you would believe. **"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31-32)**. Cling to his word, like Abraham who believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Cling to his word, because in his word **Jesus comes to you and gives you peace**. And also **Jesus comes to you and sends you on a mission**.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples on Easter Sunday evening, he sent them on a mission. In verse 21 it says, **"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'" (John 20:21)**. God sent Jesus into the world to pay for the sins of the world. Jesus has accomplished that mission. But for people to be saved, they need to hear that message and believe it. So Jesus sends his disciples on a mission to speak the good news. Christ has given us that same mission: to speak to our friends, relatives and neighbors about Jesus. But that task is hard and it seems to be getting harder. You hear lots of reports about church attendance and church membership plummeting across the United States. It's easy to become pessimistic. But instead of becoming pessimistic, let's remember that we have a risen and living Savior. Let's not doubt the power of his word. Look how he equips the disciples and us for our task. **"And with that Jesus breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22)**. If we think we have a difficult task, the disciples had an even more difficult one. The people who killed Jesus were still alive. The disciples would be opposed at every turn. But Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit to empower them for that task. And Jesus has also given the Holy Spirit to us. He gave us the Holy Spirit when we were baptized. When we were baptized, we were born again of water and the Spirit, as Jesus says in John chapter 3 (3:5-6). And he continues to give us the Holy Spirit through his word. Jesus empowers us for our mission. And what is that mission? Our mission is to speak to people the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus. Jesus says, **"If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven" (John 20:21a)** I pray that Jesus would give you the privilege of talking with someone who has been struggling with guilt for years and you get the privilege of saying to them, "Jesus paid for all your sins. If you believe in Jesus your sins are forgiven." Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace be with you." I pray that God would give you the privilege of seeing someone find peace in Jesus. Or if a fellow Christian has sinned and they come to you and say, "I'm feeling guilty about this." You get the privilege of saying to them, "Jesus died for your sins. Your sins are forgiven." It may happen in our lives as Christians when there is someone who despite being shown his sin, stubbornly refuses to repent. Then we have to tell them in sadness and in love, "Your sins are not forgiven because you are not repentant." That's why Jesus says in the second half of the verse: **"If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:21b)**. But even there, or perhaps especially there, the goal is that they would recognize the seriousness of their sin and repent. And then we can tell them with joy, "Your sins are forgiven." Remember that Jesus said that there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. In this verse Jesus says that we get to announce the forgiveness of sins to those who repent and have faith in Jesus. That is a powerful message. The Spirit and the risen Lord work through that message. We have every reason to optimistic about its results. That doesn't mean there won't be setbacks. It means that this mission is worth it. We have a message that gives people eternal life and we have a risen and living Lord who has sent us to proclaim that message. Let's stop doubting and believe. Jesus comes to us with his peace and Jesus sends us on a mission. Amen.