

JOHN 20:19-29
PEACE BE WITH YOU!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 20 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As we have seen over the last few weeks, Jesus has been crucified. His body has been placed in a tomb. And then, three days later, on a Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the grave!

He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, and then the other women. The disciples of Jesus, the men were still wondering what this was all about. Peter and John, upon hearing what Mary said, ran to the tomb and saw the empty tomb and the grave clothes laying there like an empty shell.

Peter didn't get it, but John knew something had happened and I don't think that he was completely sure that Jesus rose from the grave at this point, not yet.

And make no mistake about it, the disciples of Jesus were fearful of the Roman authorities, they were fearful of the Jewish religious leaders.

That is interesting to me because Jesus told His men back in John 14:27-28, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I.”**

What are they fearful about here in John chapter 20? They are fearful that Jesus is gone, they are on their own, and they are wondering when the Jewish religious authorities or the Roman authorities were going to come after them, as we will see this morning.

But Jesus tells them not to fear, to be at peace. Yes, He was going away but that is not how it ends. He is coming again and now that is the farthest thing from their minds. Even though Jesus told them that He would be raised up the third day, they just did not get it. All they could focus on was that He was going to die, and they would lose Him forever! Now it has happened!

And what we see is that they had no peace, just fear of what the world, in a sense, was going to do to them for their relationship with Jesus!

Also, in John 16:33 Jesus told them, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

In other words, they had their eyes focused on the wrong thing. They were focused on the world, and they had no peace. Jesus is telling them that they needed to focus on Him because that is where true peace, lasting peace can be found!

Fear can be very paralyzing in our lives. Let me share this with you and you will see what fear can do. We are told,

Black Bart was a professional thief whose very name struck fear as he terrorized the Wells Fargo stage line.

From San Francisco to New York, his name became synonymous with the danger of the frontier. Between 1875 and 1883 he robbed 29 different stagecoach crews.

Amazingly, Bart did it all without firing a shot. Because a hood hid his face, no victim ever saw his face. He never took a hostage and was never trailed by a sheriff. Instead, Black Bart used fear to paralyze his victims.

His sinister presence was enough to overwhelm the toughest stagecoach guard.

- Today in the Word, August 8, 1992

I have called our study this morning – ***PEACE BE WITH YOU!***

I think that is something that we all need to have in our lives, the peace of God because the world will never give us the peace we need in our lives!

And I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

DO NOT FEAR – JOHN 20:19-21

NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS – JOHN 20:22-23

I WANT PROOF – JOHN 20:24-25

THOMAS, IT IS ME – JOHN 20:26-27

THE WORSHIP OF JESUS – JOHN 20:28

BELIEVING IS SEEING – JOHN 20:29

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 20, beginning in verse 19 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and we look at this topic –

PEACE BE WITH YOU!

JOHN 20

VERSES 19-21

John doesn't tell us about Jesus' meeting with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that is found in Luke chapter 24. Remember that they didn't recognize this was Jesus and they were sad that the Lord was put to death. And Jesus gives them this Bible study sharing about the Messiah and goes to their house to eat with them.

In fact, Jesus stayed with them until after dark and then disappearing when He broke the bread at dinner with them. It was then, when they saw Him pray, they saw who He was –

JESUS!

And now it was Sunday evening. All the disciples are in this room except for Thomas, he was absent. And, of course, Judas was not with them, he hung himself!

And the disciples of Jesus are locked inside because they feared what the Jews might do to them.

Now we may read this, “**... when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews . . .**” and we may think, “***What is wrong with them? Jesus said that He was going to be raised the third day and now, it is the third day. Why in the world are they so fearful? Why didn't they just trust Jesus?***”

Now we do need to be honest with ourselves here. I am sure we have all felt that way from time to time as we read these Biblical stories of the Children of Israel, of the disciples of Jesus and the early church! And we think, “***Just trust the Lord guys. What is wrong with you!***”

And the Lord tells us, “***Son, you need to look in the mirror!***”

Why does He do that?

Because He wants us to see that that we are no different.

What do I mean by that?

How many times in our lives do we let fear drive us instead of letting the Lord guide us? I am sure it is a lot and fear is a result of taking our eyes off the Lord and focusing on the situation.

The fear of the unknown is a huge fear in our lives. If we knew what would happen, how it would all end, it would be easier than not knowing.

My wife would say, ***“I wish the Lord would just give me the ten-year plan so I know what is going to happen, how things are going to work out!”***

It would be great but then do we really need to trust the Lord and walk by faith?

Not really but we need to remember that what is unknown to us is completely known by the Lord and thus, we follow Him!

Let me show you what I mean about we how like to trust what we know more than taking a chance with something we are not sure of. We are told,

Several generations ago, during one of the most turbulent of the desert wars in the Middle East, a spy was captured and sentenced to death by a general of the Persian army.

The general, a man of intelligence and compassion, had adopted a strange and unusual custom in such cases. He permitted the condemned person to make a choice. The prisoner could either face a firing squad or pass through the Black Door.

As the moment of the execution drew near, the general ordered the spy to be brought before him for a short, final interview, the primary purpose of which was to receive the answer of the doomed man to the query: ***“What shall it be - the firing squad or the Black Door?”***

This was not an easy decision, and the prisoner hesitated, but soon made it known that he much preferred the firing squad to the unknown horrors that might await him behind the ominous and mysterious door.

Not long thereafter, a volley of shots in the courtyard announced that the grim sentence had been fulfilled.

The general, staring at his boots, turned to his aide and said, ***“You see how it is with men; they will always prefer the known to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet I gave him his choice.”***

“What lies beyond the Black Door?” asked the aide.

“Freedom,” replied the general, ***“and I’ve known only a few brave enough to take it.”***

The story illustrates the situation many people face each day - a choice between the known and the unknown.

Few have the courage to come alive, to stop being engulfed in a sea of mediocrity - humbled and dulled by failure to recognize their own potential. They lack the fortitude to stop living their lives in a mentally-chloroformed condition in that ignoble mass of humanity . . . the uncommitted.

The choice is yours (Phil 4:13). “By grace ye are saved through faith” (Eph 4:28). “We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7).

- A Treasury of Bible Illustrations

Think about that for a minute. What lies behind – ***THE DOOR – JESUS CHRIST!***

Freedom from our sins and yet, many refuse to go through that door!

And for us, He still is ***THE DOOR***, and we need to trust Him, walk by faith, not letting fear stop us but faith move us! ***HE IS OUR PEACE!***

Now, in saying all that, let me also say this. There is nothing wrong with fear, it is a warning that something is going on. It can keep us from danger. Fear is going to be there. The key is what you do with that warning, that fear. You can let fear incapacitate you or you can let it bring you to the Lord to guide you!

So here they are, in this room with the doors locked, secured so no one can come in. And as they are in fear of anyone coming in, what happens?

All of a sudden Jesus is in their midst! I am not sure why they are surprised because Mary and the other women told them Jesus has risen, that they saw the risen Lord, but these men were afraid! They thought that they had seen a ghost!

In Luke 24:36-43 we are told of this, **“Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’”**
When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.”

Keep in mind that the doors were locked and yet, Jesus came right through the door. What that means is that the resurrection body of Jesus was different than His physical body. He was able to pass through walls and doors or other physical barriers, which goes contrary to the laws of physics as we understand them!

And how did He show them that He wasn't a ghost?

He told them to touch Him, look at the wounds in His body that He received on the cross of Calvary and prior to being crucified as well.

And if they still didn't get it, He ate with them. He wanted them to understand that He was real, you could touch Him, He could eat with them.

And the words of Jesus to this fearful group of men was simple. Jesus says to them ***“SHALOM”*** or ***“PEACE.”***

God does give us comfort during the most difficult times if we would only look and receive that comfort into our lives.

Trench put it like this, *“‘Peace to you,’ is an assurance that there is no cause to fear, and that all is well: for they (Luke 24:36) were alarmed by His manifestation.”*

They absolutely were alarmed when they saw Him, thus, **“Peace be with you.”**

Now when Jesus shows them the wounds He received, they rejoice that it is the Lord.

And what does Jesus tell them to do?

Build a church and start up a coffee shop there in the church?

No, not at all!

Maybe He told them to start up a program to help people build up their fragile self-esteem?

No, not at all!

Maybe He told them not to do anything. The victory is won on Calvary and thus, sit back and do nothing.

No, not at all!

And make no mistake about it, we can and we have put all kinds of things in there, but the reality is, this is what Jesus told them – **“... ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”** John 20:21.

In other words, we are to go and bring the Good News, the Gospel message to a lost and dying world! The world is dark, it is evil, but God can change all of that if we are willing to listen and obey His call for our lives.

It is called the Great Commission and the reality today is that it has become the Great Omission!

Listen to what Jesus told His men after His death and resurrection. In Matthew 28:18-20, **“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”**

Jesus has been given this authority or official right over all of creation because He is God.

And notice what the Lord tells us here. The command that Jesus gives to us is very simple, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”**

Because He has the authority, we are therefore commanded to go! It is by His authority that He sends us. It is by His authority that He guides us. It is by His authority that He empowers us.

And notice where we are to go!

To all nations and make disciples.

Interestingly enough, this word, **“go”** is a participle and should be translated, ***“As you are going . . .”***

As you go out into the world, our faith goes with us and people should see it, hear it because we are living it!

So we are to share the Gospel message but what is the Gospel?

It is as simple as this. Man is separated from God because of sin. Thus, you must show them first of all that they are sinners and the best way to do that is to make them tell you they are sinners.

How can you do that?

Just ask them some simple questions, especially if they think they are good enough to get into heaven.

Ask them,

“Have you ever lied?”

“Have you ever stolen anything?”

“Have you ever looked upon another person with lust in your eyes?”

And the answer to those questions for every person is **“YES!”**

Thus, they just admitted that they are a lying thief who has either committed adultery or fornication!

You see, they just told you that they are a sinner!

They must be aware of the problem before you give them the solution.

Once they see that they fall far short of the standard that God has set, perfection, you can show them that ***“Christ died for our sins.”***

That is the Good News and by asking Him to be Lord and Savior of your life all of your sins will be cast as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more!

Jesus accomplished this by paying in full the penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary and rose from the grave on the third day just as the Scriptures tell us.

It is as Paul wrote back in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

That is the reason that our relationship with God the Father is restored because our sins have been nailed to the cross of Calvary and the righteousness of Christ has been imputed into our lives by faith!

And please understand that when you share your faith that is not the end of your responsibility, that is only the beginning.

You are then to take them under your wing and teach them the things of God. They are babes in Christ, and they need to be fed and if you shared your faith with them then you need to make disciples of them as well! You need to feed them the Word of God!

Many don't do this today; they share the Gospel and move on but that is not what Jesus is saying here.

Also, Jesus tells us to baptize them. Now please understand that this baptism is not for salvation but identification. You see, they are already saved because they have received the Gospel message, they have asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives. Once they do that, once they come to Jesus then they should be baptized!

The whole idea of baptism is that it is an outward showing of an inward reality, you are telling the world that you are a Christian, the old life is buried in the waters of baptism, and you have come up new in Christ.

And I love what it says here. That Jesus is with us until the end of the age, until we go home to be with Him! Don't forget that fact! Don't let the enemy discourage you or make you feel you are on your own.

So – ***DO NOT FEAR!***

As we read on, we will see that these men that were there that night became – ***NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS!***

VERSES 22-23

Remember what I have called these verses – ***NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS!***

Why? Weren't they saved already?

Yes, they were saved but they were saved in the Old Testament sense.

But now, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, as Jesus is before them, they become New Testament believers!

Now I do understand that many read this passage that Jesus breathed on them and they believe that nothing really happened!

John MacArthur believes that this is nothing more than a promise that the Holy Spirit would come in them, and they would become New Testament believers at that point, on the Day of Pentecost.

This is what he wrote,

Since the disciples did not actually receive the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost, some forty days in the future (Acts 1:8; 2:1-3), this statement must be understood as a pledge on Christ's part that the Holy Spirit would be coming.

- John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1424

Now does that make sense to you?

It doesn't to me!

And here is why. Listen carefully to what John 20:22 says again. We are told, "**And when He said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'**"

Here is a question that I have. Is there a time stamp on this showing us that this is a future event?

No there is not!

He breathed on them and then He gave to them the Holy Spirit!

And this is the promise that Jesus had given to them, the promise He made in the upper room the night before His crucifixion.

Listen to what we are told in John 14:15-17. Jesus said, **“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”**

At that point and prior to what Jesus said and did here in John chapter 20, the Holy Spirit was **WITH** them.

You see, the Holy Spirit could not be **IN** them until our sins were paid in full and Jesus rose from the grave.

At this point the Holy Spirit is **IN** them, and they are New Testament believers!

And let me say this. When Jesus breathes on you and says to you **“Receive the Holy Spirit”** something is going to happen, and it did!

Now, in about 50 days from this point, they will be empowered with the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit comes upon them and empowers them for service, to be witnesses of Jesus! That is the start of the Church, on the Day of Pentecost!

Keep in mind that we have seen two of the three Greek prepositions spoken of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit was **WITH** them drawing them to Christ and now, the Holy Spirit is **IN** them, they are New Testament believers.

The third Greek preposition regarding the Holy Spirit is that He will come *UPON* believers.

Keep in mind that this is taking place on the evening of His resurrection, Sunday evening.

But in Luke 24:49, prior to Jesus ascending up into heaven, we are told, “**Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.**”

There is that word, *UPON!* But what is this promise all about, this promise of the Father?

Now people have all kinds of crazy ideas about what this promise from the Father is all about, but why guess, just let the Scriptures speak for themselves.

In the book of Acts, which is a continuation of the Gospel According to Luke, we are told in chapter 1, “**And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ . . . But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**” Acts 1:4-5, 8.

You see, they had all the tools, they were saved, but they were lacking the power to run those tools and that is the empowering of the Holy Spirit in their lives or the Holy Spirit coming upon them. The Holy Spirit was *IN* them, salvation, but not yet *UPON* them, empowerment!

And in Acts chapter 2 we see this empowering for service and Peter comes forth and speaks boldly the things of God and 3,000 people get saved!

Now some argue that this is not for us today, it was for the early church, it is no longer needed. I disagree with that. We still need the power of God’s Spirit upon our lives!

And keep in mind that this power is to be witnesses for Christ. We see this empowerment in the Old Testament as the Holy Spirit came upon certain individuals, but the Holy Spirit never came in them because they were still in their sins, the payment for their sins was not completed at that point, but now it is.

Now I know that some wonder why this is so important.

Just look at the disciples of Jesus before they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, and they were doing nothing. They had the information, the tools but they did not have the power to run those tools you might say.

Let me show you what I mean. I have some power tools at home, and they are great. But imagine if I got out my drill and didn't plug it in, I had no power to run it.

I could still probably use it, but it would be very hard, very frustrating and the fruit of my labor would be very small.

On the other hand, if I plugged in that drill and used the power to run it, how much easier and more fruitful it would be.

The same is true in our spiritual lives. Ask God to empower you for service that you may be a witness of Jesus Christ, not in the power of the flesh, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is as the Lord said in Zechariah 4:6, “**. . . ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.**”

You see, Jesus is continuing His ministry through us, through His followers!

Now, like I have said, some still like to argue that the gifts were only for the early church but listen to what Peter said regarding this promise of the Father in Acts 2:39, “**For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.**”

Who is this *baptism unto power* for?

It was for them, it was for their children, and it is for all who are afar off. In other words, you and me and it is for all who ask, this empowerment for service, this *baptism unto power!* I hope that clears that up for you.

I know that is a tough one for some of you, but since we have gone down that road with tough issues, let's continue on.

Look at John 20:23, where Jesus said, "**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them: if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**"

Now, in the Roman Catholic Church they believe that Jesus has empowered the priests to hear confession and then to forgive the person of their sins.

Is that what Jesus is saying here?

Not at all and at least the Jewish religious leaders understood this. No man has the power to forgive sins. Remember in Luke 5:21 we are told, "**And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'**"

If God alone can forgive sins, then, how can we?

Let me be clear on this. We can't forgive sins, only God can, and those sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ.

Then what is this saying here?

It is saying that we can tell a person that if they receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in their life, their sins are forgiven.

On the other hand, if they reject Jesus, we can also tell them that their sins remain!

You see, we don't provide the forgiveness, we proclaim it!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this regarding this verse. He wrote,

A correct understanding of the Greek text helps us here. Some years ago, I corresponded with the eminent Greek scholar Dr. Julius R. Mantey (now deceased) about this verse, and he assured me that the correct translation both here and in Matthew 16:19 should be: ***“Whosoever sins you remit [forgive] shall have already been forgiven them, and whosoever sins you retain [do not forgive] shall have already not been forgiven them.”***

In other words, the disciples did not provide forgiveness; they proclaimed forgiveness on the basis of the message of the Gospel.

Another Greek scholar, Dr. Kenneth Wuest, translates it ***“they have been previously forgiven them.”***

As the early believers went forth into the world, they announced the good news of salvation. If sinners would repent and believe on Jesus Christ, their sins would be forgiven them!

“Who can forgive sins but God only?” (Mark 2:7)

All that the Christian can do is announce the message of forgiveness; God performs the miracle of forgiveness.

If sinners will believe on Jesus Christ, we can authoritatively declare to them that their sins have been forgiven; but we are not the ones who provide the forgiveness.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, p. 314

Exactly!

So here we see that these disciples are – ***NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS!***

As we read on, we are going to look at Thomas, who was not there on that Sunday evening, and we are going to see Thomas say – ***I WANT PROOF!***

VERSES 24-25

Now we are not told why Thomas was not with the other disciples that Sunday evening when Jesus appeared to them.

I think that Maclaren gives to us this interesting perspective. He wrote, *“Thomas did the very worst thing that a melancholy man can do, went away to brood in a corner by himself, and so to exaggerate all his idiosyncrasies, to distort the proportion of the truth, and hug his despair, by separating himself from his fellows. Therefore he lost what they got, the sight of the Lord.”*

That truly is a possibility. But again, we are not sure, and we have to keep in mind that even though he is called *“Doubting Thomas”* we don’t see Jesus rebuke him for his doubts.

Does Jesus rebuke Thomas?

Yes He does and we will see that when we get to John 20:27 where Jesus tells Thomas, “**.. ‘Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’**”

You see, it was a matter of belief! Jesus rebuked Thomas for his unbelief!

In fact, here in John 20:25, when Thomas says, “**... I will not believe**” it is in the double negative.

In other words, what Thomas is saying is that *“I absolutely will not, no way will I believe.”*

What would Thomas not believe?

He would not believe that Jesus had risen from the grave.

That is a big deal, to believe that someone was raised from the grave. So we may think we can understand why he felt that way, but we also need to understand that he rejected what all the disciples were saying, that Jesus is risen. They saw Him, He was with them. He spoke to them.

And this was not just a onetime thing. They kept telling Thomas that Jesus is risen. In John 20:25 the word “**said**” means that these disciples “**kept saying to him**” that they had seen the risen Lord!

And Thomas finally tells his friends, these other disciples, “**... ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’**” John 20:25.

And keep in mind that Jesus told Thomas and the other disciples that He was going to be put to death and He would rise from the grave on the third day. I guess Thomas did not really believe what Jesus said to him and the other disciples as well until they saw the risen Lord.

Let me say this. There is a cost to unbelief; doubt, discouragement, despair, misery and-so-on.

On the other hand, with belief comes rejoicing, hope, encouragement and-so-on.

What state do you want to be in, what state do you want to live in?

Yes, Thomas said – ***I WANT PROOF!***

And the Lord is not going to leave Thomas in that hopeless condition as we will see Jesus tell Thomas – ***THOMAS, IT IS ME!***

VERSES 26-27

So, eight days later Jesus appears to His men again and this time Thomas is present. And the way this is written it seems to be saying that on the following Sunday Thomas was gathered with the other disciples.

We also are told that the doors were once again shut and yet Jesus stood right in the midst of His men. Like we saw a week earlier when Jesus appeared to His men except for Thomas, He was able to pass through doors and walls. His resurrection body was far different than His earthly body that He had.

And once again we are told that Jesus said to them, “**. . . Peace to you.**” John 20:26.

As believers have you noticed that Jesus brings peace into our lives! How wonderful that is and as we have seen, the doors were shut because these men were still afraid of the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman authorities coming to take them away. And Jesus takes away that fear and He replaces it with peace!

And then Jesus focuses on Thomas. Remember what Thomas wanted to see before he would believe?

We are told in John 20:25, “**. . . ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’**”

And what does the Lord tell Thomas to do?

He tells him to “**. . . ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’**”

What we see here is that Jesus, knowing the heart of Thomas, encourages him to reach out and touch His wounds, which tells me Jesus was not some kind of ghost; you could touch Him in His resurrection body.

And that is exactly what Thomas does. Jesus is encouraging Thomas to believe!

So often our doubts, our unbelief that God will see us through a situation causes us all kinds of trouble. But please understand that God wants to draw out your faith, He wants you to grow. It is not easy but listen to what He is telling you and then believe.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“Often God does not condemn our doubt and He also often reveals and does remarkable things to speak to our doubt and unbelief. But doubt and unbelief are not desired conditions for the disciple of Jesus. If they are checkpoints along a path leading to faith, they should be dealt with a generous love; but doubt and unbelief should never be thought of as destinations for the disciple.”* (David Guzik)

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 11:6, **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

Faith to believe!

Unbelief is tough. Listen carefully to where it leads. We are told,

Rock and roll musician Paula Cole laments her loss of faith:

As a child, I felt what we call God, that spirit, that energy. Then you get schooled by society, and I rationalized that it didn't exist.

It made me profoundly unhappy that there was no meaning, no logic, no unity of all life.

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First of all, her idea of who God is was off and thus, her disappointment, her doubt, her unbelief was all based on what she perceived and not what the Word of God has to say.

You see, our ideas of God can be all over the place and the only way to get them focused and correct is by digging into the Word of God and trusting the Word of God and applying the Word of God to your life!

But with belief, there is peace, comfort, hope. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

A certain pastor observed a little girl standing outside the preschool Sunday school classroom between Sunday school and worship, waiting for her parents to come and pick her up for “big church.”

The pastor noticed that she clutched a big storybook under her arm with the title “Jonah and the Whale.”

Feeling mischievous, he knelt beside the girl and asked, “What’s that you have in your hand?”

“This is my storybook about Jonah and the whale,” she answered.

“Tell me something,” he continued, “do you believe that story about Jonah and the whale?”

The girl said, “Why, of course I believe it!”

The pastor inquired further, “You really believe a man can be swallowed up by a big whale, stay inside him all that time, and come out okay?”

She declared, “Yes! This story is in the Bible, and we talked about it in Sunday school today.”

Then the pastor asked, “Can you prove to me this story is true?”

She thought for a moment and then said, “Well, when I get to heaven, I’ll ask Jonah.”

Finally the pastor asked, “What if Jonah’s not in heaven?”

The girl put her hands on her hips and sternly declared, “Then YOU can ask him!”

- Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

The faith of a child! I love it and we need to have that kind of faith that trusts what God has said in His Word. We need to be believing because unbelief hinders our walk with the Lord!

Warren Wiersbe gives us this insight. He wrote,

It is an encouragement to us to know that the Lord had a personal interest in and concern for “Doubting Thomas.” He wanted to strengthen his faith and include him in the blessings that lay in store for His followers.

Thomas reminds us that unbelief robs us of blessings and opportunities. It may sound sophisticated and intellectual to question what Jesus did, but such questions are usually evidence of hard hearts, not of searching minds.

Thomas represents the “scientific approach!” to life - and it did not work! After all, when a skeptic says, I will not believe unless -” he is already admitting that he does believe! He believes in the validity of the test or experiment that he has devised! If he can have faith in his own “scientific approach,” why can he not have faith in what God has revealed?

We need to remind ourselves that everybody lives by faith. The difference is in the object of that faith. Christians put their faith in God and His Word, while unsaved people put their faith in themselves.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 315

And we will see that as we move on, that the object of our faith is vital to our faith. And remember that the Lord is compassionate with us and keeps leading us, showing us who He is.

What did He say to Thomas to help his unbelief?

He said – ***THOMAS, IT IS ME!***

And I want you to see the response of Thomas to what Jesus said to Him because it is something that we should do every day! We are going to see – ***THE WORSHIP OF JESUS!***

VERSE 28

Notice the transition here with Thomas. He goes from unbelief, “**I will not believe**” to a radical belief, “**My Lord and my God!**”

Here we see that Thomas affirms the deity of Jesus by calling Him both Lord and God, not “*a*” god!

Yes, as we have seen so many times here in the Gospel of John, Jesus claimed to be Almighty God, the voice from the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3!

And if you think about this, what Thomas said, if it was not true, why didn’t Jesus say, “***Thomas, no my son. I am not Almighty God. Please do not worship me!***”

Jesus didn’t forbid Thomas from worshiping Him as God because Jesus is God, plain and simple.

Remember in Revelation 22:8-9, what happened with John when he tried to worship an angel. We are told, “**Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’**”

If Jesus is not God, then we should not worship Him, but He is and He deserves our worship!

Also, in Luke 4:8 we are told, “**... ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’**”

I think that is very clear, we are only to worship God and since Jesus is Almighty God, we are to worship Him!

Here’s the thing. We are not to worship any man! We are not to worship any angel! And I don’t care who you are, what talents you have, we are never to receive worship from anyone!

If we are to only worship God, which we see the Scriptures tell us, then why did Jesus never reject worship from men in His earthly ministry?

I know, I keep driving this point home, but it is important. The reason He didn’t reject the worship of men is because He is God!

Now, if you still doubt that, if you have a hard time believing that Jesus is God, even though we have seen that over and over again in the Gospel of John, that He is God, then you are closing your eyes to the truth and you are refusing to believe.

Think about this for a minute. ***“For a Jew to call another human associate ‘my Lord and my God’ would be almost incredible . . . Thomas, in the light of the Resurrection, applied to Jesus the titles of Lord (kyrios) and God (theos), both of which were titles of deity.”***

(Tenney)

At least Thomas was honest with what He believed and again, Jesus did not reject what Thomas said because it is true!

Now, there are many Scriptures pointing to the deity of Jesus but just for one, listen to what we are told in Hebrews 1:8-10, **“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’ And: ‘You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.’”**

If God the Father calls Jesus, the Son, God, I will believe it instead of the foolishness of what man has to say in regard to Jesus not being God!

Think about it like this. There is no reason to worship the stars, animals, fish, plants when you can worship and need to worship the One who created them – ***JESUS!***

I think that shows us why Thomas did what he did – ***THE WORSHIP OF JESUS!***

As we finish up this morning we are going to look at – ***BELIEVING IS SEEING!***

VERSE 29

Notice that for Thomas to believe he had to see and that is like many people today and even many Christians today. They have the motto – ***SEEING IS BELIEVING!***

But notice what Jesus is saying here to Thomas. It is the exact opposite – ***BELIEVING IS SEEING!***

In other words, Jesus is calling for us to walk by faith. Even though we may not see how this will work out or understand how this will work out, we are to believe in God and His Word and by believing you will see what God is going to do by faith!

And look how this has come into the church. They want to see some sign, some miracle, some wonder or whatever to believe instead of trusting what God has said in His Word.

Remember in John chapter 4, when Jesus healed the nobleman's son. We are told in John 4:48-49, "**Then Jesus said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.'**"

So it is one miracle service over here and another one over there and it is like a fix. You can't walk unless you receive your fix of miracles and wonders or whatever. And let me say this, God does the healing according to His will, we don't plan it or have some kind of healing service.

In fact, that is a carnal belief system and when things don't happen, your faith will be shaken.

I will give you an example.

There was a woman pastor who was diagnosed with cancer, and she believed she would be healed. She refused any medical treatment because God was going to heal her.

As time went by the cancer spread and she died.

The problem here was that her husband, some of the elders at this church, their faith was shaken. They could not believe that God did not heal her. They had a crisis of faith because their faith was based on signs and wonders and not the Word of God. Be careful!

Remember what Jesus said, "**... 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'**" John 20:29.

Boice adds these thoughts to what Jesus is saying here. He wrote,

"I believe He is speaking, not of a subjective faith, but of a satisfied faith. He is speaking of faith that is satisfied with what God provides and is therefore not yearning for visions, miracles, esoteric experiences or various forms of success as evidence of God's favor."

This is so important for us to understand, that – ***BELIEVING IS SEEING!***

May we trust the Lord and His Word to us and then learn to walk by faith and not by sight! (II Corinthians 5:7)

And I will close with this. Keep in mind that the focus here is that Jesus is risen from the grave and thus,

When we say “Believing is Seeing” this runs counter to our culture but is perhaps the foundation of faith. Now having faith in Christ is not a blind faith but is one where the evidence in favor of the resurrection events is staggering, as recorded in the scriptures. If you take the scriptures alone, there is no way one can conclude that Jesus did not rise from the dead.

- <http://bit.ly/3YZvE2j>

And thus – ***PEACE BE WITH YOU!***