



**The Power To Change
John 20:19-29
Westport Christian Church
April 4, 2010**

Today is "Resurrection Sunday!" The day in which we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Just a couple of days prior, God demonstrated His own love toward us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The penalty for our sins had to be paid and God being and just and holy, gave His own Son for us.

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10NASU)

The Scriptures teach us that God loves us, that He wants us to come to Him, but how, how do we know for sure? We can have full assurance because of the resurrection of Jesus. It is in the resurrection of Jesus that we discover the power to change.

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced

when they saw the Lord.

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." (John 20:19-29NASU)

Spring is my favorite time of the year. A time when we can see with our own eyes life springing up from many things which only a few weeks ago appeared to be dead. The coldness and bitterness of winter has been replaced with warmth and sweetness, a change has taken place. Have you thought about how difficult it would be to explain this transforming power to someone who has never seen it for them self? How could you describe grass that is brown turning green? How could you describe lifeless trees that are beginning to bud and bloom? It would be hard to put into words this wonderful transformation, which is taking place. How life could spring up from death?

The disciples of Jesus had a hard time understanding how the One whom they had followed for over three years was crucified, but they had heard He was alive! We know for sure that John was there and it is hard not to speculate that perhaps others were watching from a distance. The question they perhaps were asking as well as many today, how could anyone survive the beating, the whipping, carrying a cross down the street, up a hill, and then having nails driven into your hands and feet. Hanging there for hours and then having a spear thrust into your side. How could anyone survive? The answer is no one could. These followers of Jesus were left without a leader. They had given up everything to follow Him and now they were basically hiding out wondering what they were going to do now. In his book, "More Than A Carpenter," Josh McDowell writes, "the apostles themselves had to be convinced that Jesus was raised from the dead. At first they hadn't believed. They went and hid. They didn't hesitate to express their doubts. Only after ample and convincing evidence did they believe."

These followers of Jesus moved . . .

From Fear To Courage!

The disciples were locked in the room because of fear from the Jewish leaders. The text said the Jesus came and stood in their midst. But did you catch the first words that Jesus spoke to them? "Peace be with you." He didn't come in and rebuke them for their unfaithfulness. He didn't come in and chastise them for not believing. He simply came in and said, Peace!

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27NASU)

The work of the cross is peace, and the message His followers who declared is the gospel of peace. Man had declared war on God, but God would declare "peace" to those who believe.

Thomas, one of the twelve had heard that Jesus was alive yet he stated, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Eight days later Thomas was given that opportunity. For Jesus said to him, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." You see, the wounds meant more than just some identification; they were evidence of the price, which was paid for the salvation of man. The price that was paid which offers the opportunity for man to have peace with God.

The basis for all our peace is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He died for us—He rose from the dead in victory, and now He lives for us! He comes to us in grace and truth, reassuring us through His word. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." (Prov 27:6NASU)

The disciples were hiding out in fear until Jesus came to them and offered them peace. What fear are you facing? What is it in your life that is causing you stress and fear, anxiety and trouble? Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt 11:29-30NASU)

Today, Jesus is offering you the chance to change from fear to courage. This power of the resurrection goes much farther than this, it changes . . .Unbelief to Confidence!

Have you ever wondered why Thomas was not with the other disciples? Why wasn't he there when they met on the evening of Resurrection day? Was he so disappointed that he did not want to be with his friends? When we are discouraged and defeated, we need our friends more than ever! Solitude only feeds discouragement and helps it to grow into self-pity, which is even worse.

Perhaps Thomas was afraid. But John 11:16 seems to indicate that he was basically a courageous man, willing to go to Judea and die with our Lord. We know from John 14:5 that Thomas was a spiritually mined man who wanted to know the truth and was not ashamed to ask questions. We often think of Thomas as "Doubting Thomas," but I feel I must warn all of us not to isolate Thomas. Jesus did not rebuke him for his doubts; He rebuked him for his unbelief.

"Be not unbelieving, but believing," Jesus said. Doubt is often an intellectual problem, we want to believe, but faith is overwhelmed by problems and questions. Unbelief is a moral problem. What was it that Thomas would not believe? What is it that keeps you and me from believing?

We read in our text that the others kept saying to him that Jesus is alive, that they have seen Him. No doubt that after eight day other had seen Jesus. The two on the road to Emmaus and still others. Yet what kept Thomas from believing?

I think Thomas wanted a personal experience with Christ. On one hand I admire Thomas for this, but on the other we see that he was laying down conditions for the Lord to meet. Isn't that like us many times? I'll believe and do what I should , if! If God answers my prayers the way that I want, then I'll believe!

Like most people in that day Thomas had two names. Thomas, which was Aramaic, and Didymus in Greek . Didymus means twin. Who was Thomas's twin? We don't know but sometimes I wonder if it's not you and me? How often we have refused to believe and insisted that God prove Himself to us! I see Thomas's experience as a good warning to all of us not to miss meeting with God's people on the Lord's Day. Thomas not meeting with the others missed out on not only getting to see Jesus, but he didn't get to receive His blessings and His peace! He had to endure a week of fear and unbelief instead of receiving the joy and the peace! Remember Thomas when you are tempted to stay home from church. You never know what special blessing you might miss!

We must stop being faithless and become believers. We must stop saying prove it to me and start saying, "My Lord and my God." Hebrews 3:12 gives us a warning about "an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God."

Our text does not say that Thomas touched Jesus, but from simply seeing Him he said, "my Lord and my God!" We need to remind ourselves that everybody lives by faith. The difference is in object of that faith. Christians put their faith in God and His Word, while unsaved people put their faith in themselves. "Blessed are those who did not see yet believed."

Oh my friends do not be unbelieving, but believing. Put your faith into action and allow the power of the resurrection to turn your unbelief to confidence?

The resurrection is the power to change . . .

Death to Life!

John's gospel did not end with Jesus dying on the cross, but the miracle of the resurrection! John finishes this chapter by writing, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31NASU)

This gospel was written so that we could experience and know that Jesus is God and that faith in Him leads us out of death to life! It would be so awesome to have walked with Jesus down the road to Emmaus. It would have been so wonderful to watch Him heal the sick, walk on water, raise the dead or any of the other miracles He did, but it is not necessary to have seen those things to believe. Yes, it would be a blessing, but again it isn't the miracles that will save you, it is a relationship with Christ, which saves! So, faith comes by hearing, hear the words of Christ. All the evidence points to the fact that Jesus is God who came in the flesh to die upon the cross for the sins of mankind. And the proof is the resurrection!

The gospel message is this, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor 15:3-4NASU)

Conclusion; (Video—Three Days Later)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives each of us a chance to start over. A chance to experience for our self the power to change. The power to change from fear to courage, from unbelief to confidence, from death to life!

This power is still available to you today, are you ready to accept it?

AMEN