

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Absent Thomas”

Scripture: John 20:24-29

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of John, the resurrected Jesus appears to the apostle Thomas (sometimes referred to as “Doubting Thomas”).
 - He is one of the twelve disciples that was not with the others (in vv. 19-23) when Jesus appeared to them while they were hiding in a house.
- The other disciples catch up with Thomas and explain to him that they encountered the resurrected Jesus. It is interesting to note that they’re announcement to Thomas is similar to that of Mary’s to them in 20:18. Thomas did not believe what they were saying and says in verse 25: “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”
- Despite having the testimony of the other disciples, Thomas refused to believe them that Jesus has returned and demanded “proof”. He knew Jesus had died and could not understand how He could overcome death from the crucifixion.
- Jesus responds to Thomas by repeating “Peace be with you!” and telling him to “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas responds to Jesus by saying “My Lord and my God!” in verse 28.
- In verse 29, Jesus tells Thomas, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” This story ends with Thomas having the same belief in the resurrected Christ as the other disciples had.

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- This sermon is from the third Sunday of Easter. Easter is our time of recalling and retelling the miracle of the Resurrection. However, this is a miracle that not everyone can embrace...it is especially true for those that did not see it for themselves.
- Today we hear about the third Resurrection appearance in the Gospel of John. The first appearance was to Mary Magdalene at the Tomb, the second was to the disciples behind a locked door when they were in hiding, and the third is to the disciple Thomas. He is the disciple that we refer to as the “doubter”.
- The only reason we single Thomas out is because he was not present with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them.
- It is important to keep in mind that doubt is *not* the opposite of faith. Our doubts do not pose a threat to the almighty God! If you think about it, Jesus made a special appearance to Thomas during his time of doubt. Jesus came back to give His friend what he needed.
- There are no “week after” stories in the other Gospels: (1) Mark ends with the empty tomb; (2) Matthew adds a few lines of Jesus appearing to the disciples in Galilee to give them the Great Commission; and (3) Luke tells the story of a “stranger” meeting up with two disciples on the road to Emmaus...but this happens on the same day of Jesus disappearing from the tomb. Once He vanishes from the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, He vanishes altogether. John is the only Gospel writer who accounts for what it’s like to be a disciple *after* Easter.
- Listen closely to what Thomas’ request actually was: “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.” It’s the wounds he wanted to see.
 - What if Thomas was wanting proof that the risen One is the same One who died?
- Jesus says that we must find the blessedness in believing what we haven’t seen.
- When we are tempted to say that we should have been there, Thomas is here to remind us that “no, you did not have to be there to be a part of the Easter story.”
- Jesus came back for His friend...He keeps coming back for us. Be alert to the faces around you...is Jesus loose in them? Do you see *Kingdom* in them?

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Thomas' doubt is no different than the doubt many of us encounter in matters of our faith. We sometimes want "proof" of something in order to believe in it. When have you experienced moments of doubt in your faith? What has helped you in affirming your faith?
- Is it wrong to have doubt in your faith? Why or why not?
- What value do you think this story has in this section of John's Gospel?
- What makes faith *believable*?
- Where, and maybe in whom, do you see the Kingdom of God?

