

The King has Risen

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[0 : 00] I wonder if you've ever been swimming or riding or driving and you've seen a sign and not believed it.

Have you ever seen a road closed sign and thought, nah, I don't reckon. I've got to check for myself. It's strange, isn't it? But despite the oddness of responding to signs this way, people still do it, don't they?

I was at a wedding at a beach in Sydney. It was a hot day. My friends, Pete and Adrian, were with me and they wanted to go for a swim. They didn't have their bathers with them because it was a wedding.

But they decided to take off their suits and go for a swim anyway. And they got down to the sand and there were some signs in the sand in front of the water that said dangerous conditions.

It turns out there were rips all across the beach that day. But Pete and Adrian, they were bold, considered themselves to be good swimmers.

[1 : 02] They said, we'll be careful. And so they went for a swim and what do you know? Before too long, they're caught in a rip and they were being dragged out to sea.

Now, Pete and Adrian are good and strong swimmers and I don't really consider them to be idiots. But they didn't believe the signs and they ended up getting in big trouble.

In today's passage, we meet a disciple who also probably wasn't an idiot. But he refused to believe the signs of Jesus' resurrection.

Our passage for today begins after Jesus has shown himself alive to the women and most of his disciples. Those of you who were here on Friday heard from Luke's gospel about Jesus' trial and death.

Well, here in John 20, Mary Magdalene, who'd watched as Jesus was crucified and as he died, came to the tomb early on Sunday morning and found the stone rolled away.

[2 : 12] And so she ran and told two disciples who also came and found the tomb empty. And soon after this, Jesus appeared to Mary, which she reported to the disciples.

And later that day, Jesus appeared to the disciples. They were behind closed doors, it says in verse 20. And Jesus showed himself to them alive and they were overjoyed.

Our passage begins just after this. Mary and most of the disciples have seen Jesus alive. And then John tells us about this disciple called Thomas at point one.

Thomas is one of the 12, but he wasn't with them when Jesus appeared. Have a look in your Bibles at verse 24. Thomas, also known as Didymus, one of the 12, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, we've seen the Lord. Thomas missed out on seeing Jesus alive. Well, this may have been sad for him, but not to worry.

[3 : 18] A bunch of his close friends were there to see him so they could tell him the news. But despite this, Thomas is doubtful. Look again at verse 25 to see his response.

The other disciples told him, we've seen the Lord. Thomas has heard the news.

He's not convinced. But he's convinced. Even though at least 10 of his good friends, friends who he's likely spent maybe all of his time with in the last few years, all telling him the same good news.

We've seen the Lord. But he doesn't believe. I wonder if you would. To be honest, resurrection isn't that common.

Would you have been doubtful if you were in Thomas's shoes? I tend to think that I, probably most people would. The other day I said to Tiff, my wife, the Notre Dame Cathedral is on fire.

[4 : 40] And she said, what? No. I tend not to lie to her. And I'm sure she was shocked to hear the news. But only when I told her about the news report was she fully convinced.

It's not that uncommon to respond to unlikely news with disbelief, is it? So maybe Thomas did the right thing. Perhaps this is an appropriate, healthy skepticism in response to something so unlikely.

I mean, you can't believe everything you hear, can you? Just imagine how many gym memberships you have. Now, I know you heard the same story from a bunch of good friends all saying the same thing, but resurrection.

Would you believe that? This isn't just another hard to believe news report like the temple's on fire, but that our master who was crucified just days ago is now alive.

It doesn't sound that likely, does it? Maybe despite what Thomas had heard and who he'd heard it from, there really was reasonable doubt. At least that's how Thomas feels.

[6 : 00] He needs more proof. He needs hard evidence. Unless I put my finger where the nails were, put my hand where the spear was, I will not believe.

He needs more than a report from friends. He needs to see and touch. Only then will he believe. Is this you?

I'm sure it's true for many people. But in this case, it need not be. In this case, Thomas should have known better.

Because while Thomas hadn't yet seen, there had been signs. Signs which point to the resurrection beyond reasonable doubt.

Look with me at verse 26 in your Bibles. 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.

[7 : 12] So some time passes. The disciples are all together again. And this time, Thomas is with them, unwilling, I'm sure, to miss Jesus when he appears again.

And his patience pays off, doesn't it? Jesus appears to them once again. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus stood among them and said, Peace be with you. I always laugh when I read this verse.

Sounds like a funny way to bring peace. It's like hiding in the cupboard and jumping out at night. Don't be afraid. So Jesus appears and Thomas finally gets his chance, doesn't he, to see Jesus for himself.

Look at verse 27. Thomas said, sorry, he said, then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side.

Stop doubting and believe. Jesus appears to the disciples again and gives Thomas just what he wanted. Thomas got to see and touch the nail marks.

[8 : 16] He got to put his hand into Jesus' side, which is a little gross. Thomas got the chance to see that Jesus really had risen from the dead.

He was alive. It really was him. Thomas got the proof. And you can see that in verse 28, that he really did believe.

He sees Jesus and says, My Lord and my God. He's convinced. Now he believes beyond reasonable doubt. He's seen Jesus alive in the flesh.

So it seems perhaps that it wasn't a bad choice to respond the way he did from this news from his friends. He doubted. He doubted.

But eventually he got the proof that he wanted. He saw Jesus and believed. But you see, there's more going on here.

[9 : 18] While it seems like Thomas's response was right or wise, Jesus doesn't agree. After Jesus showed himself to Thomas, he says, did you see it?

Stop doubting and believe. What I think has happened here in this scene. Jesus hasn't simply come to reveal himself to Thomas, but he's come to rebuke him for his doubt.

And if that's the case, I begin to wonder the opposite question from before. Was Thomas wrong to have responded the way he did?

Should he have believed the report from his friends? Should we? Well, Jesus says, yes.

Look with me at verse 29.3. Then Jesus told him, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

[10 : 21] Thomas was right to believe when he saw Jesus. We see his faith, don't we? When he sees Jesus and says, my Lord and my God, he recognizes and acknowledges Jesus as king.

A recognition of praise worthy of Jesus' character. But despite this worthy acknowledgement, Thomas still responded to the news about Jesus wrongly.

This is what Jesus implies when he says, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Part of what Jesus is saying is that belief is the expectation for those who hear the news about Jesus.

Belief is the expectation of those who hear the news. But how can this be? Surely with a report like resurrection, Thomas's skepticism was appropriate.

How can belief really be expected? Well, because of the signs.

[11 : 32] Let me try and illustrate. Up here, I've got my secret stash. No one knows what's in here except for me and everyone at St. John's.

I'm going to do a bit of a test right now. Will you believe what's in my secret stash? And so to do this, I'm going to need a volunteer who's going to help me, someone to come up from the crowd.

Put your hand up and come up. Vince, you're so bold. Let's give him a round of applause. Thank you. Okay.

All right, come and stand over here, please, Vince. Now, without removing anything, can you please open the lid and take a look inside the box?

You can open it right up. You sure you know what it is? Make sure you know. You sure? You don't have to close it.

[12 : 40] You can keep looking at it. Now, without taking it out, can you tell us what it is? An emergency moustache.

An emergency moustache. Are you serious? As much as I'd like to do. Okay. I guess just in case you need to have a mow.

Emergency. Thanks very much, Vince. You can go and sit down. You did a great job. Yep, you can clap. Now, who of you here believe, Vincent's report, that there really is an emergency moustache in here?

Who believes? Who believes? Get in, you believe? What do you believe? Oh, so you believe the reports? Jess, what do you believe?

You called it a secret stash, and I would not let that one. Oh, wow. You guys are switched on. Let me tell you why you can believe this report.

[13 : 59] Because of the report, but also because of the signs. Can you see the signs? Can you see the signs? Did you see them on your way in, in here?

Look at the signs. Not only were there physical signs, but as Jess very, very cleverly pointed out, I even said it, my secret stash.

The signs and the report reveal what's in the box. Because of the signs, you can believe without actually seeing what's inside.

This is a bit like what happens in the passage. John tells us plainly how and why we can believe because of the signs. Have a look, verse 30. Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these, the signs, 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 is saying that while lots happened, while Jesus was with them, the signs of Jesus that are recorded here are here for a purpose.

[15 : 16] He says, these are written so that you might believe. Belief, John tells us, is expected for those who read and hear about the signs because they point to Jesus as the God King, as the one who died and rose again.

So what should our response be to hearing this passage? Well, in short, belief. Not that you should always believe me or that you should believe everything you hear, but we should believe the signs which point to Jesus, our God and our King.

And so I wonder where you are in regard to hearing and responding to the news about Jesus from this passage.

Perhaps you're like Thomas. Maybe your friends are telling you about something that they have already become convinced of, but there's still some doubt in your mind.

Do you find yourself thinking like Thomas? Unless I see, I will not believe. If that's you, let me commend you for your consideration, but also encourage you to see the signs.

[16 : 39] Think again about what Jesus said to doubting Thomas. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. And we have the signs, don't we?

God promised in the Old Testament what would happen. A king who would not see decay from Psalm 16. Jesus told his disciples what would happen and proved who he was by the things he did.

And the apostles saw the resurrected Lord and they've told us about it. The signs that God has left in his word point to the truth about Jesus.

Jesus says to Thomas, we can believe and those who believe, Jesus says, are blessed. Jesus says to Thomas, those who believe without having seen are blessed.

So does that mean that those who have believed are better off than Thomas? Well, yes and no. They're not better off because while Thomas failed, he's still saved because he acknowledged Jesus as king.

[17 : 47] But yes, because they believed without doubt. How is that better off? They're better off because those who believe the signs and believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God will have life.

In the end, they're not better off than Thomas. But they are better off than the people who respond like Thomas. The people who respond like doubting Thomas, they will never see Jesus in the flesh.

Before it's too late. Like Thomas, they stubbornly refuse the signs and reports saying, I need more than what God has given.

[18:59]

[20 : 05]

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