

*Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**John 20:24-29 (EHV)**

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas, one of the Twelve, the one called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

<sup>26</sup> After eight days, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Take your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue to doubt, but believe.”

<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

*Dear Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit on us so that we may believe and see Jesus as our Lord and God. Amen.*

There’s a saying many of us would know which tells us: ‘seeing is believing’.

The assumption is if we can see something for ourselves, we’ll believe it, however, in this age of amazing Artificial Intelligence capabilities which can create incredibly realistic videos based on a few well-chosen instructions, seeing something doesn’t necessarily mean it’s true!

It also suggests all our other senses are subservient to our sight. After all, we don’t say hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling is believing. We say *seeing* is believing.

But what if we’ve got this the wrong way round? What if seeing is *not* believing?

After all, don’t we often want to *see* things *because we don’t believe them*?

For example, imagine you’re Thomas. For some reason you weren’t there with the apostles on that night when Jesus appeared to them. You meet up with them later and they joyfully told you of their experience of seeing the risen Lord Jesus among them!

But you weren’t there! You didn’t see what they saw! So, instead of believing what you heard from the apostles, you say you’re *not going to believe* unless you *see* him for yourselves. You *won’t believe your ears* and will only let your *eyes* confirm this truth.

In fact, you’re not going to believe your *ears* and *eyes* unless you’re able to put your *fingers* on the nail marks on his hands and thrust your own hands into his speared side. Until you *see and touch* this news you’ve been told you’re not going to believe, after all, seeing is believing!

But that’s the twist. We want to *see* because *we don’t believe*!

In this case it’s very easy for us to relate to Thomas. Of the remaining apostles, he was the only one not there. But none of us were there either! You and I haven’t had the chance to witness our risen Lord for ourselves and use our own senses of sight and touch to confirm the good news of his resurrection. None of us were in that locked room to see the risen Jesus standing among us.

This is why we have this story in St John’s gospel account, because we weren’t there. This true story was written down for all the Thomas’s in the world who weren’t in that room. This means it was also written for you and me because we haven’t seen him with our own eyes or touched him with our own fingers.

While Thomas was given another opportunity to investigate the risen Lord Jesus with his own eyes and hands, we haven't had that opportunity.

We still haven't seen Jesus in the flesh. We haven't had the chance to place our fingers into his wounds, and so we continue to struggle with our doubts and fears. No matter what we *hear* in God's Word from these first-hand witnesses, we might still demand to *see or experience* certain things *before* we believe.

We're just like Thomas when we think or say such things like:

"Unless God answers my prayers the way I want him to, then I won't believe."

"Unless I get something special out of worship today, then I don't think this worship experience or this church is any good for me."

"Unless I feel something when I'm baptised or when I receive the Lord's Supper, then I'll question its validity."

"Unless I get what I want from God or his church and can confirm it with my own senses and emotions, then I don't want anything to do with them."

Unfortunately, these kinds of questions reveal we want to meet God on our own terms.

It also shows we're struggling to believe. It shows we're just like Thomas. Maybe we do believe, but we struggle with our unbelief as well.

The strange thing about faith is it never remains static, that is, it never stops in one place. While we'd like to think our faith in God will always increase and get better during our life, it doesn't. We journey through life wavering between faith and doubt, trust and suspicion, belief and unbelief. Some days we're certain of what we believe, but other days we'll question and doubt what we've heard, seen, or experienced.

For this reason, we can learn a lot from people like Thomas.

When he doubted or struggled to believe, he didn't dismiss or ignore the fellowship with his fellow disciples. He didn't stay away from their next gathering, but came back into their little congregation hoping to hear, see, and touch Jesus.

Like Thomas, we too still need to gather together to *hear* the Word of God read and explained. We may not always understand it or believe it, but unless we hear the truth of God in the Bible readings and sermon, we're not going to believe it. So, we need to keep listening to what God's got to say through his witnesses.

Like Thomas we still need to *touch* and *taste* Jesus as we receive our risen Lord's body and blood on our fingers, on our lips, and on our tongue.

While our senses of sight and touch and taste will tell us: 'this is simply bread and wine', the Holy Spirit will ask our sense of hearing to be the more powerful one so we may believe what we hear: That this is Jesus' body and blood, given and shed for us.

The fact is, a faith which doesn't constantly look to, listen to, and seek to touch our Lord Jesus Christ, will slowly die. A faith which refuses to come into his presence and receive his spiritual benefits will shrivel up. A faith which makes demands for proof of God's love outside of the written Word, the cross of Christ, and his holy Sacraments, is in danger of leading to despair.

If any of us want to see and experience Jesus on our own terms, then like Thomas, we're becoming an unbeliever. If we keep away from the place where his people meet, then we're becoming an unbeliever.

Then, just like Jesus said to Thomas, he says to us, ‘Stop doubting and believe’, or literally, ‘Stop becoming an unbeliever and become a believer’.

This is why Thomas, in his time of doubt, went to the place where Jesus promised to be – with his people.

In our times of doubt, we need to do the same, after all, we know Jesus promises to be wherever his people gather in his name. We know his Holy Spirit is present as we hear the Word of God read and proclaimed. We know Jesus promises to wash, adopt, forgive, and give new life to those who are baptised. We know Jesus promises his true body and blood is present in his holy Supper.

Seeing isn’t always believing, because the demand to see is a sign of unbelief, but *believing is seeing*. Faith gives us a greater sight so we may believe what we hear, despite what we see and don’t see.

By *believing what we hear*, we *see* Jesus is our Lord and our God. We can stand beside Thomas and *see* Jesus is more than just a man. By faith, we *see* Jesus is also the Son of God who came to suffer, die, and rise again for us so that, by believing, we may have life in his name. By faith we *receive peace* with God when *we hear our sins are forgiven* here on earth and also in heaven.

By believing what we *hear*, we can *see* God truly comes to us, hidden in times of simple worship to grant forgiveness, peace, and hope. He comes to challenge us and comfort us through Spirit-filled Words. He comes to wash us and claim us as his own people who will live with him forever through baptism. He comes and wraps his own holy body and blood in humble bread and wine and offers them for us. He comes, hidden in the people joined to him through faith to love and care for us. He comes, sometimes despite our best efforts to lock him out.

Yes, Thomas was blessed to see his Lord and Saviour in the flesh and use his senses of sight and touch. Yet, as Jesus himself says, blessed are those who haven’t seen, yet still believe, because they trust their sense of hearing.

You’re all blessed because you believe what you’ve heard. Jesus is our Lord and God even though you haven’t yet seen him with your own eyes or touched him with your own fingers. For this reason, you see Jesus in a greater way than Thomas could ever see him, because by believing, you truly see.

*Therefore, through faith in your risen Lord Jesus, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

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South Burnett Lutheran Parish  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter  
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