

St. Thomas: A Witness to the Resurrection



You remember the story—Jesus had Risen from the Dead and was first seen by St. Mary Magdalene. There outside the Tomb from where He has Risen, Mary saw and spoke to Jesus. It was a life changing moment for St. Mary Magdalene, and having seen and talked with the Risen Lord she dashed to the upper room where all the Disciples were hiding. You see the Disciples were afraid of the Temple Police—they had arrested Jesus and executed Him—were they to be next? And into their hiding place ran St. Mary Magdalene with that story of having seen Jesus alive. Silly women, she doesn't understand that dead means dead. The Temple police would be after them, not her. Can't trust women at a time like this, can one? Jesus alive? Nonsense. He was dead and buried. And the disciples did not believe her.

Later that afternoon, Jesus appeared in that upper room, through that locked door, and stood in the midst of those frightened disciples. "Shalom," He says. "Peace be to you." It can't be, He can't be alive? Are we hallucinating, all of us together? Is it something we ate? My Lord, He is really here. That silly woman was absolutely right. He is here. He is alive. And the disciples rejoiced and rejoiced and rejoiced. Jesus is alive.

The next day, the disciples are out on the street—no longer afraid—they are filled with joy, still stunned beyond comprehension. And there on the sidewalk, they met Thomas.

"We've seen the Lord," they shouted. "We've seen Him and talked with Him and listened to Him. He's alive, Thomas!"

"Sure," says Thomas; "sure. What are you guys using? Jesus was crucified. He was buried. We all saw it. He's dead."

"No, Thomas, It's for real. He is alive," the disciples said.

"I don't know what you guys are on, but unless I see the nail holes in His wrists and feet, and the spear hole in His side, I simply won't believe your stories."

You got to give Thomas credit. He knew his stuff. The dead stay dead. Everyone knows that. Thomas is just like us. A dependable common-sense guy, who was not going to be carried away by tall stories, no matter who tells him. A common sense guy. We all have friends like Thomas. Simple sensible people, who are nice enough, but not given to running off chasing silly dreams.

But let me tell you one thing about Thomas—he was not one to close his mind to possibilities. Some of my friends will tell me that Jesus died, and that was that—but when I invite them to come to church to check it out, they don't have time. Their minds are made up already, and no evidence is going to change their minds. Thomas was not like that.

The next Sunday, the disciples were gathered together in the upper room, as they all had done before, all excited to see if Jesus would appear again—AND Thomas was with them. That's the kind of guy Thomas was—common sense, but not closeminded. If Jesus was really going to appear alive, it would be in the upper room, and so Thomas came to check it out.

And Jesus appeared. There He stood in the midst of His disciples, and joy and amazement reigned in that room. Jesus turned to Thomas (who must have been standing there with his mouth hanging open!) and said: “Thomas come here and put your fingers in the holes of the nails, and your hand in the spear hole in my side; and be not faithless but believing.”

The Bible does not tell us what happened next—so let me tell you what I think happened. I don't think Thomas put his fingers in the nail holes, or his hand in Jesus' side—I think Thomas sank to his knees and cried out: “My Lord and My God.”

Sure, Thomas was definitely convinced. He now saw and believed. But I wonder if you notice what he said: “my Lord” would be standard—but then he added “and my God.” Notice that please. Because it is the **FIRST TIME** that anyone in the world had recognised Jesus for whom He really is. “My Lord and my **GOD.**” Yes Thomas—you were the very first person to see that. You went from utter unbelief past the beliefs of the other disciples to understand who Jesus really is: “My God.”

Then something happens that is amazing—it is just for us. Jesus speaks to Thomas, yes, but then **He speaks to us:** “You believe now because you see Me—but **blessed are those who have not seen but BELIEVE.**” There is no one in that room to whom Jesus was speaking—they all could see Him—Jesus was speaking to you and me today—for we have not seen but believe. If you remember nothing else this morning, remember what Jesus is saying to you today. “Blessed are those who have not seen but believe.”

Thomas was with the other disciples to hear Jesus' last teachings. He was with the disciples when Jesus ascended back into Heaven. He was with the disciples on that Sunday morning called Pentecost when the Holy Spirit anointed the disciples and founded the Church. From that moment, we call them Apostles (sent out) and St. Thomas was one of them. Certainly, St. Thomas was one of them, but the Gospels do not tell us what happened to him after that. Did he go preaching to the Jews or the Gentiles? What happened to him? The Church didn't know. There was no evidence. Until the 15th century.

In the 15th century, the Portuguese navigated south around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa, and sailed north up the side of Africa, and landed in the city of Goa in India. There they traded for goods to take back to Europe and explored the city. They found lots of

Hindu temples, and evidences of many pagan gods. But then they found one temple that seemed different from the others. No Hindu gods, no sacrifices, no paganism—and suddenly they discovered it was a Christian Church. There in Goa were over a hundred thousand Christians, that no one back in Europe knew existed. And as they investigated further, they learned the story. 1500 years before, St. Thomas had travelled east from Israel, telling others of the Gospel, and his seeing the Risen Christ. He settled in Goa India and founded a Church that is still there today. There are a million disciples of St. Thomas there today, worshipping God, and celebrating the Eucharist just as we will do today. Their ceremonies are a bit different, their language is Hindi, but their Faith in the Risen Christ is as strong as ours today.

The Risen Christ changed St. Thomas; the Risen Christ changed many in Goa India, and the Risen Christ can change us today—because He is with us now. So, like St. Thomas before us, as we approach the Altar this morning to receive the Blessed Sacrament, let us say in our hearts: “**Jesus, you are My Lord and My God.**”

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.