



Week 3 – Thomas

Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... because today we're talking about a guy with a nickname, what's a positive nickname you've been known by and how did you get it?

Opening Prayer

God of Assurance, free us from the weight of our doubt.

Help us to be bold, expecting you to show up in our lives, and not to be too shocked when it happens.

Introduction

In our next Easter "Stinger," a particular disciple was saddled with a nickname that has, somewhat undeservedly, stuck with him for nearly 2000 years. We'll look at his story, and the legacy for which he *should* be known, today. First, let's recap... why are we looking at these stories? Why are these "post-credits scenes" to the Easter movie

important? These stories matter because they show the life-changing power of the Risen Christ. It's easy for us to think that Jesus's followers simply encountered a resurrected Jesus and then immediately were off starting the first churches. But, it's not that simple. There were 40 days in between Easter and when the disciples begin preaching the good news. And it's in these 40 days that we see just how dramatically these encounters with the Risen Christ changed their lives. Without these experiences, they don't change the world. It wasn't until they encountered the risen Christ that they understood that he was the Savior, not just of Israel, but of all humanity... The I Am, Immanuel, God on Earth. So, we have to look at these stories, these Stingers. Because, without them, Jesus's followers are simply left with some good teaching and a mystery about an empty tomb. With them... we see the life-changing impact of the Risen Christ, and how his mere students, became world-altering sharers of the good news.

Warm-up Question: What was an impactful moment in your life, without which you wouldn't be on the road you are on today? What made that instance so dramatic to changing your life, setting you off in a new direction?

Scripture

Today's "Stinger" picks up right where last week's left off. Keep in mind, it's still Easter Sunday. Yes, we've been doing this series for 3 weeks now, but for these first "post-credits scenes," it's still the same day Jesus rose from the dead. He appeared to Mary this morning and to our Emmaus guys in the afternoon. It's now Easter night and they've

run back to Jerusalem, to the house where all the disciples are hiding, with rumors running rampant that Jesus is appearing all over the place. (Pastor Mike got in trouble last week for equating Christ to a “resurrected whack-a-mole” cuz he was just popping up everywhere. Oh well... anywho...) The Emmaus guys tell their story about meeting Jesus on the road... and then....

Read John, chapter 20, verses 19 to 25.

And thus, Thomas earned himself a nickname he’s been stuck with for two millennia... *Doubting* Thomas. But think about the shift in the atmosphere of the room. When he left them, (even if he had been there when the women said the tomb was empty,) we know the disciples were still confused, unsure what to make of things. So, the tone of the room Thomas left was worried, anxious, palpable concern. But when he walks back in later that night, they’re excited and optimistic, and greet him as if he were Norm from Cheers. This had to be a shock, so it’s no wonder he responded how he does in verse 25, “prove it.”

Question 1: Talk about this story. Put yourself in the shoes of the followers in the Scripture. Where would you have been? Would you have responded as Thomas did... “prove it”? Would you have just gone with the flow, “if they said it, I believe, too!” What stands out to you about this Stinger?

Reflection

This leads us to two questions... first, did Thomas deserve this title? And second, if not, then who really was this guy we call The Doubter, and what can we learn from his “post-credits scene?” So, first, did he deserve his nickname? Well, no. He hasn’t doubted any more than anyone else. Every single person in that room questioned the empty tomb. Every single one of them struggled with the testimony of the women and Mary Magdalene who was the first to witness Christ and tell them he was alive. There wasn’t a one of them who didn’t respond the same way he did that day. He just gets singled out for his response.

So, if he doesn’t deserve this title, who was he? What *should* he be remembered for? Well, first, we know he was bold. He shows up in a story earlier in John where Jesus learns that his friend, Lazarus, has died. When the other disciples warn Jesus that Lazarus lived in an area where they’d made some enemies who had actually tried to stone Jesus not all that long ago, but Jesus is intent on going anyway... it’s Thomas who says, “suck it up boys, if Jesus goes, we go, too... and if he dies, we die with him.” That’s a far cry from “Doubting Thomas.” We also see that he’s hungry to believe in Jesus. In a scene during the last supper, just a few days before today’s “Stinger,” Jesus is trying to reassure his disciples, knowing he’s about to be killed. He tells them, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled, I’m going to my Father’s house to prepare a place for you... you know where I’m going.” He was, of course, talking about heaven, but it’s Thomas who wants to believe, so he digs a little deeper. He says, “Lord, we don’t know where you’re going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5) And it’s this line that

opens the door for Jesus to explain that he is more than just the man from Nazareth, he is Immanuel, God on Earth. Thomas was inquisitive and had a hunger to know Christ. A far cry from “Doubting Thomas.”

Question 2: What is a misconception people have about you? Is there something in how people perceive you that doesn't truly reflect who you are or how you see yourself? Dig as deeply as you'd like.

Thomas was bold and held a hunger to know Christ, to believe he was who he said he was. So, it's perfectly in character for him to respond how he did. It was a bold response. It was a response born out of his desire to believe Jesus was the Christ. “Jesus, show up.” But it was also this response that led to a beautiful moment just a week later.

Read John, chapter 20, verses 26 to 29.

Jesus appears to the disciples again and goes straight to Thomas. He knows Thomas, (Thomas the Bold, Thomas the one longing to know Christ,) needs this moment. And so, he immediately answers his questions. “Here, you wanted to see the holes in my hands. You wanted to touch the wound in my side. Have at it. I'm here... I'm real... I'm risen... Believe!” Everything Thomas has asked for is answered. And how does he respond? “My Lord and My God!” (v.28)

This is a verse that's easy to skip past, but there's something in here that's truly powerful. Jesus has been called “Lord” before. That's not

new. Jesus has been called the “*Son of God*” before... so that wouldn’t have been out of the ordinary either. But Thomas, in this moment, takes it up a notch. He responds, “My Lord and my *God*.” No one, to this point, and not in any real way for a long while, calls Jesus, “God.” Just a week and a half before this, during the Last Supper, Jesus answered *his* question by proclaiming he and the Father are One... that he was Immanuel, God on Earth. Now, fast-forward to our Stinger. When Thomas finally encounters the Risen Christ and sees the nail holes in his hands and touches the wound in his side, the things Jesus said during the Last Supper had to have flashed through his mind. And suddenly, it all became clear... he gets it. So, what does he exclaim? “My Lord and my *God!*” Doubting Thomas? Nope. He’s the first one who got it right.

Question 3: Thomas’s response was not one of doubt... it was born from his boldness and desire to know Christ. He asked Jesus to show up in his life. What is an area of your life right now that seems uncertain, where you’re struggling to see the outcome, where you need Jesus to show up?

Closing

Jesus responded to Thomas with a powerful statement. Maybe he let Thomas go 8 days so that he could say this, knowing it would be written down, and read to us 2000 years later, “**You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.**” (v. 29) It’s difficult to face those things that we are waiting on God to reveal. But this Stinger and Thomas teach us, to be bold. Thomas asks Christ

to show up. “Show me the holes in your hands, show me your pierced side... show up.” And he does. And so, just as Christ revealed his scars to Thomas, we will encounter him, too. It just takes some patience. That’s not doubt. That’s not a lack of faith. That’s working things out on God’s schedule. In the meantime, be bold. Ask God to show up. Thomas wasn’t a doubter. He was bold. But most of all, he longed to know Christ. Take a note from Thomas, find that longing within yourself to know Christ. Find that hunger... let it out. Be bold and ask God to show up. Ask Christ to be revealed in your life. And then be patient... because just as he did for Thomas, he’ll show up for you, too.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.