

Good morning, church.

It's good to see you all. Little bit about me, some information maybe you need to know about me, is that I have, throughout much of my life, really struggled at different times and in different ways with fear and doubt. When Kennedy and I got married and we moved from Texas to Wyoming, there was a lot of fear and doubt.

Are we really gonna enjoy this frozen tundra of a state? We got lots of opportunities to go on different backpacking trips, and there was one that her brother-in-law led us on in Colorado in the Weminuche Wilderness for a week, and him and I butted heads a few times, and we're crossing avalanche fields and doing some different stuff, and I had some doubt that he really wanted to get me out of there.

You know what I'm saying? There was some fear in that. Growing up, I had a lot of doubts about God. I had a lot of doubts about His Word. I had a lot of doubts about is what His Word says about Him, is it true? Did Jesus really live? Did He really die? Did He really raise from the dead? Is He really good? I had lots of doubts.

Most recently, while maybe those have not been my fears and doubts most recently, in Kennedy and I's move to North Carolina, there was a lot of fear and doubt. We made the decision to move here before we even knew about Westside. We had made the decision to come here I'll speak for myself, not for Kennedy.

There was a lot of fear and doubt. God, how are you gonna work this out? Is this really the path that you are leading us down? Are you really gonna be able to use this? And the Lord continued to make things clear, and he led us to Westside and all these different things, but still going through it, there was fear and doubt We love being here, but there was fear and doubt in that season in my life.

And if we are honest, we all struggle at different points and in different ways in our life with fear and doubt. Some of the doubts that we have are probably pretty small and pretty common. Most of us probably doubt each Sunday that we're gonna get out of here in time for lunch, right? Maybe we doubt that our spouse is

going to do the dishes like they told us they were going to do.

Maybe we doubt that our kids are gonna clean up their rooms or we doubt that our parents are going to do what they said, the promises that they made, that they're gonna keep those promises. We have lots of little doubts. Maybe some of us here this morning are still really struggling with this idea of a God, and are really struggling and doubting, is He really good?

Is there really a God? Did He really send His Son to live on this earth and live a perfect, sinless life and die for me for sin? Is that really true? We're really wrestling with that. We're really doubting some of those claims. Maybe some of us are here this morning, and we don't doubt those things. We don't doubt that there is a God.

We don't doubt that He sent His Son. We don't doubt His love for us. But maybe we're in a really difficult season in life, and we're not doubting those claims, but maybe we're doubting some things about God that His Word claims about Him. We're doubting His goodness, His love, His mercy. And we would never say that, right?

We would never say with our mouth, the words would never come out of our mouth, "God, we don't believe that You're good. We're, we doubt that You are good. We doubt that You are merciful. We doubt that You are righteous." But sometimes our actions reveal what it is that we believe functionally.

We would never say those things, but we function in a way that reveals that we are doubting some things about God

This morning, we are going to be in the Gospel of John 20:19-31, so you can be turning there. And we are going to look at the disciples, and we are going to look at their doubts, at their fears, and we are going to focus in on one disciple that gets highlighted a lot when we talk about fear and doubt, and that is Thomas.

And what we are doing, maybe you remember Jacob made this announcement last week. It was in one of the videos that we did. We are walking through now a miniseries, 50 Days That Changed the World, and we are looking at Jesus's post-resurrection appearances to His disciples, to other people.

And so we are looking at from the moment that He resurrects and then those 50 days till the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost. And so we are walking through some of these post-resurrection appearances, and so that is what we are looking at this morning. If you remember, Jacob walked through pretty much all of the appearances of Jesus to different people on the day of His resurrection, as the women go out there, right?

And if you look right above John 20:19, it's the story that Jacob talked about where Mary is outside the tomb weeping, and she's talking to this man who asks, "Hey, why are you weeping?" She doesn't realize that it's the Lord. He says, "Mary," and she falls at His feet and clings to Him. He says, "Don't cling to me."

And she goes and she tells the disciples what she has seen, and that is where we pick up. In verse 19, Mary has gone. She has gone and told the disciples what she has seen. And then verse 19, John 20 says this: On the evening of that day, so this is still the first day, right? On that, of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked, where the disciples were for fear of the Jews.

Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." So we see it's that first day. They're meeting inside. The disciples are gathered, and they're gathering, and they are what? Afraid. The doors are locked. They don't want anyone getting in. Why are they afraid? They've been told that the Messiah has risen.

Surely they've heard that testimony from these women by now, and they're still afraid. Why? 'Cause they're trying to figure what out, what is going on. They are spinning from the week that they just spent with the Lord. When you walk through the events of the Passion Week, and everything that they saw, and everything that they experienced, they come to this point, and they're thinking, "Okay, you told us he's there.

Some of us have seen the empty tomb," but some of them believed. I think some of them are still having a really hard time, and they're afraid. Why? Because their leader has been killed. Who then are the Jewish authorities going to come for? The followers. And so they're hiding away. They're inside, the doors are locked, for fear of the Jews.

There was no room in the Jewish theology of their Messiah for a Messiah that died. They expected a warrior king to come in and deliver a kingdom to take out the reigning authorities, and to deliver the kingdom. There was no room for a dying and suffering Messiah, even though Jesus told them it was coming.

So they're afraid. They're afraid of the Jewish authorities, and so they're hiding inside. And then Jesus appears, right? We don't know how, but he does. He's standing around them, and I think they're probably a little freaked out, right? And he says, "Peace," "Calm down. Peace be with you." And he says this, and he shows them his hands and his side, and then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

So he shows up, and he says, "Look, it's really me. Don't be afraid. It's really me." He shows them the testimony, the scars that he still bears in his hands and in his side from his crucifixion. And the disciples are glad. And then we get, in these verses, this is basically this gospel's telling of the Great Commission.

Jesus says to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." We see here Jesus' authority. He has authority to send, and he's commissioning the disciples. He's getting them ready for the work that they're about to do. He says, "I've been sent. The Father has sent me, and so now I'm sending you."

Verse 22, he says this, and he breathes on them, and he said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." I think this is foreshadowing what's going to come in Acts 2. He's getting them ready for the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, and he's commissioning them. He's saying, "Hey, I'm sending you out. You better get ready."

When the Holy Spirit comes, you're g- you're gonna have the power to go out and do this. So get ready. I'm sending you out to the nations, to the world." If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. I think Jesus is saying, "You've, you're gonna take the Gospel message."

This is what I'm sending you to do. You are gonna take this message, and you are gonna go to the ends of the world, and you're ... I'm sending you out, and you're going to preach this message of forgiveness. You're going to preach this message

of reconciliation. You are going to preach my life, death, and resurrection."

And he commissions them to go, and then verse 24, we're given some background information. All the disciples were there. All the disciples were in that room except for one. Now Thomas, one of the 12, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." So when all this happened, we're not told how long, we're not told the amount of time between Jesus showing up to these disciples and then they meet up with Thomas.

We're not told that. We're not told that they tell Thomas anything else other than, "We've seen the Lord. This is the relevant information that you need to know. You don't need to know about Him right now commissioning us and breathing on ... don't worry about that. We have seen Him. We've seen the Lord.

This is what you need to know." And I'm sure they told him, "We've seen the scars in His hands. We saw His side. We've seen the Lord. You need to know this. We've seen Him." And Thomas responds, and this is what we know of Thomas mostly. This is what we think about him. When we think of the disciple Thomas, we think of his response here.

Thomas replies with this conditional statement. He sets these conditions up. He says, "Unless I see his hands, the mark of the nails and the pla- and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." He sets these conditions up. He tells them. He's like saying, "Don't, don't mess with me about this Stop it.

Thomas knows what he saw Unless I see his hands and unless I touch, I will never believe. This is the strongest negation possible in Greek. I will never believe. There is no possibility of me believing. Unless these things happen, I will never believe. And this is what we think about Thomas, Doubting Thomas, and we forget Thomas, I think, was a really faithful disciple.

Back in John 11, when Lazarus dies and Jesus is getting ready to take his disciples to, to raise Lazarus, right? He tells them like, "Oh, we gotta go take care of Lazarus. He's asleep." And they're like if he's asleep, he's gonna be fine." And Jesus is like, "You don't get it. He's dead," right? "He's died."

Thomas says, "Let us go and die with him." I think it's this statement of devotion to the Lord. Thomas was committed. Thomas was in. He was bought in. He had spent three and a half years with the Lord. He had seen all of these things. He was there until the very end. He was bought in. In John 14, when Jesus is meeting with the disciples for the Passover, and he's telling them all these great things, John 14:1-3, Jesus says many of us know it, "I'm going away to prepare a place for you.

And if I go, I'm gonna come back for you." This beautiful wedding, marriage language. And Thomas replies, "Lord, we don't know. How do, how can we know where you're going?" John 14:6, Jesus responds, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Thomas was a faithful disciple Thomas had been there through it all with Jesus. And we remember him for his doubting, but I want us to just take a moment, maybe I'm wrong about this, but I look at this and I put myself in Thomas' position and I think about the week that he has just had, and I think about the weekend that he has just had, and I'm thinking, how in the world could he not doubt what he just saw?

He spent a week with the Lord, and he watched the Messiah ride into the nation and the people throw their cloaks and palm branches down and cry, "Hosanna to the King of Kings. He's come." He watched Jesus go and cleanse the temple. He watched him curse the fig tree, and it withered to its roots. He spent this night with Jesus where he taught them all these amazing things, and then he watched one of his best friends betray Jesus over to the Roman soldiers.

He watched Jesus be led away to these fake and illegal trials, and he watched Jesus get beat. He watched him get spat on. He watched the crown of thorns beat into his head. He watched him led back and forth, and all these people mocking him. And he watched Jesus as he carried the cross

And he was there when the Roman soldiers are nailing the nails through his hands, through his feet. He was there watching Jesus die on the cross in front of him. He was there when he heard Jesus quote Psalm 22, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He was there when Jesus said, "Give me a sip of water," and he said, "It is finished.

Into your hands I commit my spirit." Thomas was there when they pulled his body off the cross, and he's led away to a tomb. Thomas was there, and he watched this, and now his friends are saying, "He's alive," and Thomas is saying, "I don't know about that. I know what I saw." Rome doesn't mess up with this. Rome is really good at killing people.

No one survives crucifixion. It cannot happen

Thomas is struggling with this doubt, and Thomas says, "I need some evidence unless I see him, unless I see the marks in his hands, unless I see the place in his side, and unless I touch it, I will never believe he needs some evidence." And I think we read this sometimes and we think how, like, how could Thomas do this?

Why doesn't he just believe? I think Thomas is wondering, "Did I just waste three and a half years of my life? Did I just waste three and a half years of my life following this guy? Yeah, I know he fed the 5,000. I know he walked on water. I saw all of these things, but I don't know. I need some evidence

Evidence is not a bad thing Asking questions is not a bad thing. If you are here this morning and you are asking questions, keep asking questions. There was a man, maybe you're familiar of the man Lee Strobel. He wrote a book, Case for Christ. His wife converted to Christianity. He was an atheist, and he set out looking for, let's evaluate the claims of Christianity.

I'd encourage you all, if you have doubts or if you just wanna read a good book, read that. I was supposed to read it in high school. I say this a lot. Another book I was supposed to read in high school that I did not. I somehow wrote a paper on it. Don't ask me how

But it's a good, it's a good book. But he's recounting, right? He's going back and he's looking at all of the evidence that led him ultimately to a place of Christianity is true. And much of what he looks at is, i- it's hard to deny, I don't know of many, and Jacob talked about this some last week, I don't know of many secular scholars that deny that there was a Jesus around this time period, that he had some sort of a following, that he made some fantastic claims about himself, that he died, was buried, and then his followers said, "He's not there."

And then they spent the rest of their life proclaiming that message and dying for that message

It's indisputable that some of this happened

There's evidence for that, and Thomas is looking for evidence, and he's wondering, "What am I... How am I going to take all of this in?" And then C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, I wanna read this quote He says, "I'm trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him," talking about Jesus That they would say, "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God."

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. I think Thomas is trying to figure out right now is Jesus a liar, a lunatic, or Lord?

It's one of these three, right? Thomas says, "I need some evidence. I need to see it for myself. You guys got to see it. I need to see it Verse 26

Eight days later, eight days. It's gotta be a long eight days for Thomas and the disciples. That's a long eight days. Eight days later, his disciples are where? Again, they're inside. We're told Thomas is with them this time. They're inside, and what are the doors? The doors again are locked

They're still struggling, fear and doubt. And Jesus again appears. He comes and he stands among them, and he says to them all, "Peace be with you." And in verse 27, he turns to Thomas and he says ... If you allow me to just maybe get a little technical here, but I think this helps us see what's going on with some of the writing.

So there is, Greek is a really fascinating language, and it's really cool and it's more interesting than just taking one word and looking at what does this word mean or how is it defined or how can it be defined, but looking at how people write. And by the different connecting words they use, they can point forward to something, or they can point backward to something, or they can help you see that something important is coming up.

And here what we see i, i, in narrative is everything typically is written in past tense. He said this, he did that. Every now and then, and it's fairly common in narrative, they'll switch to a present tense. Why would they do that? To try and slow the narrative down, to point you forward to what's coming, to signal, hey, something important is about to be said.

This Jesus turning and i- is saying to Thomas, says to Thomas, it's in this present tense. And we do this a lot when we're telling stories. If we're good storytellers, we do this and we don't even really realize it. This is an example that someone gave kinda trying to help explain this brief little story.

I was camping this last weekend way out in the boonies. We had pitched camp. We were sitting around the fire after dinner when all of a sudden this bear comes out of the wood. I was scared to death, so I jumped up, I grabbed some pans, and I start beating them together, but the bear just keeps coming.

You have this switch between something happened, we set up a tent, I jumped up, and this bear's coming, right? Creates vividness. It helps you signal to the listener, "This is what I want you to pay attention to." The author, he's saying, "Hey, I want you to pay attention to this." He's slowing the narrative down, and Jesus turns to Thomas and what does he say?

Does he grab Thomas up by the shirt collar and he say, "How long have you been with me? You don't get it. I gave you, I told you about the sign of Jonah. I told you that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three nights and three days, so the Son of Man would be. I told you I was gonna die.

Didn't you see all this stuff? Come on, Thomas. Why are you doubting?" Does he rebuke him? Does he tell him, "Get your act together and just believe"? Jesus did not have to do this, but he graciously meets the conditions of Thomas, and he lets him see what the other disciples got to see. He comes to him and he says to

Thomas, and we're slowing down, focusing on this, and he says, put your finger here."

See my hands. Put out your hand and place it in my side He meets his conditions. Jesus didn't have to do that. Jesus had every right to say, "Thomas, cut it out

He says, "Do not disbelieve." Don't do this, but believe. Don't disbelieve, believe. In verse 28, again we're having the narrative slowed down. There's two verbs of speaking and if we were to translate everything there, it's Thomas answered and he says to him. Thomas answered and he says to him.

Again we're slowing it down, and he's wanting ... The author's wanting to focus in on this verse, and this is where we're coming. This is, I think, the climax of this gospel. From the opening words of this gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word was God. And he dwelt among man," from John the Baptist's first testimony where Jesus comes on the scene, and he points to him and he says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who comes to take away the sins of the world."

This gospel's been leading us this whole time to this statement. This is the climax, the high point of this gospel. Thomas' statement here, and we're slowing down, we're slowing the story down. We're focusing in on verse 28 here, "And Thomas answered him and says, 'My Lord and my God!'" That is the statement we are being led to the whole time, to come to the conclusion that he is Lord and God.

And Thomas comes to that realization. He comes to that conclusion. We're not told that he reaches out and touches what Jesus offered, that he touches his hands or touches his side. Thomas simply falls down and says, "My Lord and my God." He applies these two Messianic titles to this one man. He takes these two terms that are reserved for God, and he applies it to this man, Jesus, the God man, God in the flesh.

He recognizes who he is in front of, and he cries out, "My Lord and my God." This is one of, if not the most clear statements of Jesus' deity. People try to say Jesus didn't claim to be God or people didn't think he really was God, or Thomas seems to think so. Thomas would have something to say about that.

Thomas falls down and says, "My Lord, my God." He comes face to face with him, and all of that fear, all of that doubt melts away. "My Lord, my God."

Verse 29, Jesus says to him, said to him "Have you believed because you have seen me?" This may be a question or a simple statement. Maybe this is where that kind of small rebuke comes in "Thomas, come on. Now you believe because you've seen me." He says, "Have you believed because you've seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus knows that they're about to be given a mission to go out and to spread the gospel, and that they are gonna run into a lot of people who don't have an opportunity to see the risen Lord, to see his hands, to see his side, to be standing in a room with him. And he says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

I think Jesus in this is getting the disciples ready for the work that they are about to go out and do, to go out to the ends of the earth and to proclaim this gospel message. We're told in tradition, we don't know if all of these stories are true, but we're told that Thomas eventually heads off to India and takes the gospel to India.

Thomas was, whether that is true or not and those things did happen or not, Thomas was a faithful disciple

Thomas came to this point, "My Lord and my God," crying out, falling down before Him, recognizing Him for who He is, God In verse 30 through 31, we're given the purpose of this book. We're told what this book was written for, what John was written for. It's really nice, right? When you're given the purpose for something, someone tells you why Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book.

It's like he's saying, so on, on this hand, on one hand, Jesus did lots of other things. At the end of the gospel, if you read John 21:25, he says, "There are many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." So he did lots of other things.

He did lots of other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book. You can find them in Matthew, Mark, Luke. Even they do not have all the things that Jesus did. On the one hand, there's other things that he did. However, on this hand, these things are written. Why were they written?

What was the purpose they were written for? So that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. So what? And that by believing you may have life in his name. The purpose of this gospel is to lead us to our knees and to the statement that Thomas made in verse 28, "My Lord and my God." This is where we have been being led to, moved through.

If we were to sit down and read the Gospel of John in its entirety, that is the statement we are being led to, the realization, the conclusion, "My Lord and my God." So that leaves you with a question Leaves you with a question this morning

What are you gonna do with the Lord? He's made some fantastic claims about himself. Thomas has made some fantastic claims about the Lord. What are you going to do with the Lord if you are here this morning and you are doubting who he is? Maybe you have been coming to church your whole life. You grew up in children's church.

You, you've been coming forever. You know these stories. You know these things. You know what the Bible has to say, but you're still really, you're just, you're not sure You're saying if I could just see what Thomas saw

What are you gonna do with the Lord? Are you going to label him a liar, a lunatic, or will you submit to him for who he is, and that is Lord and God? Maybe you're scared about these claims that Jesus made about himself and you're doubting all these things, and it's producing fear in your life.

My encouragement to you this morning, if you are there, is ask questions. Questions are not a bad thing. Keep seeking truth. Be willing to humbly listen to people. Don't ask questions just to dig at people. Keep asking questions. Keep searching for truth. Know that we do not have all of the answers. We cannot answer every single question that you might have But are you going to be willing to listen?

Are you going to be willing to search the scriptures? Are you going to w- be willing to humbly approach God and seek out what He has said about Himself Will you be willing to do that? And you need to know this above all else. More than any question that you might have, more than anything that you might be doubting, you need to know this, that we are all sinners separated from God We were made to be in relationship with Him, but because of sin, we are separated from Him.

And He loves us so much that He sent His Son in the fullness of time to be born of a woman, to be born under the law, to redeem those under the law. He sent Him to be born of a virgin, to live a perfect, sinless life, performing many miracles in the sight of many people. As 1 Peter says that He was led to the slaughter, and He did not revile or slander.

Like a lamb, He was led to the slaughter, and He died on a cross for us. And He was laid in a tomb for three days, and He rose three days later, conquering sin and death so that you might have life in His name by believing in Him. You need to know that. You need to hear that before you leave this morning

So keep seeking, keep asking questions. Maybe you're here this morning and you're not really struggling with doubt about who God is, about if there is a God, about who He is or that there was a Jesus, that He really di- you're not doubting those things. You don't doubt those claims, but maybe because of a situation in your life, because of some things that are going on around you, you are maybe doubting some things about God's character Maybe you're struggling with sickness or financial difficulties, or someone around you is going through a really hard time.

You're having really difficult family time Experiencing strife with your spouse and with your kids and you're beginning to doubt some things about God, and you would never say, "God I doubt that you're good. I doubt that you're faithful." We would never say those things. We would never dare say those things outli- out loud.

But maybe your actions are displaying what is going on in your heart and your mind. Maybe in these difficult circumstances, we try to manipulate the outcomes because we are doubting God's wisdom. Maybe we hold on to bitterness a- and doubt God's justice. Maybe we try to avoid confession and repentance and we try

to hide our struggles, and we doubt that God is merciful and forgiving and loving.

Maybe we grow frustrated with waiting, and we doubt God's timing and faithfulness. Not that we would consciously say these things, not that we would consciously or out loud say we doubt these things about God. But sometimes our actions display our functional theology, the things that we really believe.

How we live displays what it is that we really believe about God, right? You've all heard the saying, "We're like tubes of toothpaste. When you get squeezed, what's on the inside comes out." What we really believe about God when life squeezes is what's going to come out. And so what is on the inside? What are we believing about God?

What are the things that maybe we are doubting about God? And there are three questions that I want us all to ask ourselves today, this week, at some point, to take some time and ask ourselves these three questions: What would I need to believe about God to respond differently? So in this situation, this circumstance that's really difficult, what would I need to believe about God to respond differently?

Question two: Where am I living as if God is not who He says He is? And lastly, if someone watched my life this week, what would they conclude that I believe about God? If they watched how I live, if they watched how I respond to people, if they watched how I respond to my spouse, my children, whatever it is, how I act at work, what would they conclude that I believe about God?

Ask yourself those questions. Spend some time with those. Share them with people around you. And so when we are doubting like this, when we are doubting things about God, what do we do? What are we supposed to do? How do we handle these things? Do we just ... I think often we just think we need to just white-knuckle it through life, right?

We just need to grab on harder. Pull up, pull yourself up by the bootstraps and just keep going, right? Sometimes we've gotta just keep moving forward. We've gotta understand that, that we can't make it out of these things on our own. We can't overcome doubt and fear on our own. We have got to daily and constantly be turning back to the only one that can melt away all doubt and fear, and that is

the Lord, and we need to daily be turning to His Word.

We need to daily be spending time in prayer. And we say this every week. It's like we're broken records. We need to be in some form of community other than just Sunday morning, some other Christian community with people involved in our lives that are asking us hard questions, that are encouraging us to hold on to the Lord, that are encouraging us to push on in faith.

That is why we care so deeply about our life groups. If you are here this morning and are not involved in a life group, my challenge is do not leave without talking to someone about a life group, what that is, what that looks and we will find a spot for you. We will figure something out for you because we are not made to live this life alone.

Life gets hard, and we have doubts, and we have fears, and we need people around us that are going to encourage us and are going to help us fix our eyes on Jesus and fix our eyes on Him and cling to our high rock and tower

What about those that are here this morning that are doubting Jesus' claims that He is God? That are doubting Jesus' claims that the Gospel writers make that He lived, that He died, and that He rose again What do we do? I've already said it, and I'd encourage you to keep doing this, and that is keep asking questions.

Be willing to listen. Keep asking questions. Seek out truth. Seek out answers. But be willing to listen. My challenge for all of us, for everyone here this morning, is to take some time this week, before next Sunday, read the entire Gospel of John. It's 21 chapters. It's not that long. We should all be able to do it.

Between now and next Sunday, let's commit ourselves to read the Gospel of John, to take some time and walk through this gospel and the claims that it makes

Let's all do that and we have to come face to face with what we are being told about the Lord. We've gotta do something with that information. What are you going to do with that information? Keep asking questions. And my prayer for all of us, my prayer for everyone here this morning would be that we would daily, that we would daily, or maybe for the first time in our lives, fall down on our knees and cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

That we would daily be turning back to Him, that we would daily be holding onto Him, that we would daily be giving our lives to Him, that we would daily be giving our doubts, our fears, our anxieties to Him, and trusting in Him that He is good, that He is loving, that He is faithful, that He is all the things that He says about Himself.

That we would hold on to Him, that we would look to Him, that we would surround ourselves with loving Christian community that is going to push us, challenge us, and love us, that we would all fall down and cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." So I'm gonna pray for us as the band is coming forward. If you'll bow your heads.

Dear Lord, thank you so much for today. Thank you for this opportunity to read your Word, Lord. Thank you for this time to to worship you. Lord, thank you for preserving your Word for us Thank you for keeping it for us. Thank you for Thomas and his willingness to ask questions. Thank you for Thomas and the disciples and their testimony and their work to go out and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Lord, I pray that we would understand that we are being called as well as believers to be sent out, to take this message that we have been given, to go and confront the world's fears and doubts. That we are being asked to go out, that we are being sent, that we have been given the message, the ministry of reconciliation, that we would be willing to go and talk to people about the Lord, that we would be willing to go and confront people, that we would be willing to love people and point them towards your Son.

Lord, I pray that we all, wherever we are at in our lives That we all would come to a place where we recognize and understand who you are and what your, who your Son is and what He came to this earth to do, and that He is Lord and God. He is your son, that he is fully God, that he is God and he dwelt among us, Lord, that we would not grow tired of hearing that we would not grow tired of thinking about what it means that he came and put on flesh like us.

What it means for us to have a faithful high priest who knows what it's like to suffer, who knows what it's like to go through the trials of life, who knows what it's like to lose a loved one, who knows what it's like to be mocked, to be

persecuted.

Lord, I pray that we all would leave here this morning and be challenged this week to hold on to you, to keep walking forward trusting you. Not holding on to ourselves, not holding on to what we can do, not holding on to anything in this world, but holding on to you, and to your Son, and to the claims that He made.

And that we all would continue, continually be saying with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and trusting in you, trusting in Him. Lord, we love you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.