

the gospel of

JOHN

all intents and purposes

John: The Doubts We Have

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John 20:24-29

The death of Christ was seen as a horrific tragedy by his followers, but unknown to them. It was a plan carried out, an intentional act of sacrificial love. Every moment of his perfect life, his death, his resurrection, all of it was done to intentionally display his rule and reign over the world. How do we obey his commands to love others with the same intentional love? Join us for our final installment in our walk through the Gospel of John. We will see that God's love is behind all of his intents and purposes. Go to doxa-church.com to learn more about Doxa find service times, or support the making of disciples and the everyday stuff of life.

Good morning, Doxa. Today we'll be reading John 20, verses 24 through 29: "Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.' Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed.'" This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Thank you, Hilda. Good to see you guys. Doxa. My name is Justin, one of the pastors here, and I'm excited to get off the bench to give our superstar a break. He graduated yesterday with, uh, along with Pastor Tim, masters of something, masters of the universe, He-Man, I don't know. But, uh, we're very proud of Pastor Tim and Pastor Eddie, and it's my joy to give him a break, and to give you the Word today., Today is a great passage. It's a story of Thomas in the scripture that I'm grateful that the Bible does record his doubt, because I think it's so relevant to all of us. We know what it's like to have questions because of maybe fears, because of confusion, or because of maybe shattered dreams that we've experienced.

We know what it's like to doubt and that's why I'm really so fond of John Chapter 20, the passage that Hilda read over us. I'm really fond of Thomas. And the thing about doubts is that we tend to keep them very private, we internalize them. And so therefore, I'm very thankful again for Thomas because he says in public what many of us are maybe feeling or thinking in our minds or just in private moments. And so this is very relatable for us. It's relevant subject for us. And for the purpose of context, let me ask the question, what is exactly happening here in our passage? Jesus has been crucified, buried, and we see at the beginning of chapter 20, we see his resurrection, and then we see that he's appeared to his disciples and to his friends. And sometime in the week following the resurrection, this conversation between Thomas and the other disciples takes place.

Now, I want you to know, I think there's a lot riding on Jesus' appearance to Thomas because I think at first glance, it appears that if Jesus doesn't show up, Thomas will never believe. And that's what he says. He says, I will never believe if I don't get to do these things, right? Now, of course, it's possible that Thomas could come to believe the same way that you and I believe; that is, that we believe without seeing, witnessing the bodily resurrection of the Savior. But one thing is certain: if Thomas hadn't seen a resurrected Jesus, he would never have been an apostle. Apostle is someone who is a witness to the resurrection.

Another thing here that we see is that these verses are the verses that spark Thomas's nickname. Now, nicknames are cool. Maybe you had a nickname growing up. My son Barnabas was named after the guy in the Bible, Barnabas. Well, Barnabas in the Bible, his original name was Joseph, or Joses. Barnabas was his nickname. The name Barnabas means the encourager. Why? Because that's what he did. Barnabas was his nickname because he was a great encourager to the church. And there's a reason why I think, you know, people give one another nicknames: it's what they do. It's who they are. So for example, you know, when I was a youngster many years ago when I was a lot thinner and younger, I was really fast. I was like the fastest kid maybe in the whole school. And kids would say, Hey, that's Justin. That's the Road Runner, right? Because why? I was just, I would beat anybody in a race. Not today, but a long time ago. Or maybe you are a baseball player. I remember as a baseball player, there was a player that was super good and he played shortstop. And every time the ball got anywhere in the vicinity where he was playing, he would just suck the ball up. We called him the Vacuum Cleaner. Hey, Vacuum, you know, because he would just, anything that got near him, he would just field it, right? So nicknames can go on and on.

Well, Thomas, his nickname is Doubting Thomas. I mean, man, he had it rough! Doubting Thomas, which has become so much a part of our lexicon these days. So much so that anyone that's skeptical about anything is in danger of being called what? Doubting Thomas. But I'm so thankful that John goes out of his way, his way to remind us in verse 24, that is, that Thomas was what? One of the twelve, one of the twelve. That means that Thomas was one of the twelve, which means that he followed Jesus for three years. He's seen Jesus. He's heard Jesus, he walked with Jesus, he followed Jesus. And here we see this disciple of Jesus Christ full of doubts. Thomas says out loud in verse 25:

"Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Now, maybe that's just me. If I were maybe an actor and I had to read into Thomas's voice, what tone would I use? I mean, you know, if you were an actor and you were given this line to say, what would be your tone? Would it be, uh, you know, unless I, I do this, uh, you know, I would never believe... Or would it be, I would never believe!!! Like Braveheart, I would never believe!!! Right? Is there like, passion? Is there anger? Is there a disappointment? You know, whatever the case, I sense there's, that we can relate to this. There's a familiar sense here because if it's not you, it's someone you know, because doubt is universal. We're all, at one point or another, we we'll go through seasons of doubt. And anyone who has ever doubted, I think what they are looking for is some kind of evidence or some kind of proof.

In a 2017 research by George Barna, it said that the majority of believers experienced doubt that the majority of believers experience doubt. In fact, many doubt, and it seems that those who are the millennial generation or the younger generation, they are twice as likely to doubt, which is intriguing to me because I work with, and I serve young people in our church, and that's perhaps many of us here today as well. We're gonna look at two things this morning. First, what it means to doubt, and then secondly, what to do with our doubt?

So first I want you to consider what what does it mean to doubt? What does it mean to doubt? And right off the bat, I wanna say, having doubts does not mean that you are not a Christian. Let's just get that outta the way. So if you have doubts, and you know, you know, we just had passion week, we had good Friday, we had Easter. We believe that Jesus was crucified, that he rose again, bodily rose from the grave. And we believe that at some point that Jesus was fully dead, and then his heart started to beat. He started to breathe, his blood was flowing through his veins, and then he got up fully healed, right in his glorious resurrected body, and he walked out of that tomb. And if you have some doubts about that, listen, it doesn't mean that you're not a Christian. Real Christians can have real doubts and still be real, still be real Christians. Why? Because it's often a normative experience. In March chapter 9, there was a boy who was tormented by demons, and the boy's father comes to Jesus and he is crying out to Jesus for help. And then in Mark 9, verse 21 to 24, we read this:

"Jesus asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' And Jesus said to him, 'If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cries out and said, 'I believe, help my unbelief!'"

The father says, I believe, help my unbelief. His response was immediate. The father declared his faith. He says, I do believe, but he also acknowledges its weakness. His faith is weak. And so, yes, you can be a believer and have unbelief. Having unbelief doesn't mean you're not saved or you're not truly a Christian. That word for unbelief means weakness in faith. It doesn't mean an

absence of faith, but rather it's a weakness in faith. And so doubt, is faith that wants to believe, that longs to believe, that desires to believe, but waivers to believe. That's doubt. We see another example of this when Peter is walking on the water and we see him stepping out in faith in Matthew 14, in verse 28 and on. It says:

"And Peter answered Jesus, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' And he said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. And when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me.' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him and saying to him, 'Oh, you of little faith. Why do you doubt?'"

So Peter starts to sink. And then Jesus says, why do you doubt? Why do you have little faith? You notice he doesn't say you don't have any faith at all. No, Peter, he had faith. Enough that he actually took a few steps out on the water. That's amazing in itself. I want that "little" faith, if you know what I'm talking about. That's amazing! But then when he saw the storms and the winds and the waves, he got afraid and his faith shrunk to where it was a little faith and he started to sink. But it was, but it was still faith. He still had faith.

And that's what it feels like when we're doubting. It feels like we're sinking, doesn't it? It's this strange feeling as if your faith is slipping right through your fingers. It's like when one plus one no longer equals two, spiritually speaking. It's like you're scratching your head saying, things just don't add up Lord. And like Peter, maybe you look at your own life experiences and situations and circumstances. Maybe your own health is fading. You've lost loved ones. You're going through a really hard and difficult valley in your life. Doubt, often accompanies periods of suffering, doesn't it? And maybe in your life there's relational fallout, there's financial hardship, and one plus one no longer equals two. And you are starting to doubt. Or you're saying, I don't have the right kind of faith, I don't have enough faith. Or you're questioning the quality or the quantity of your faith. Or maybe you're doubting because you don't see change and inner transformation happening in your life. So you say, well, I'm not changing. I'm not growing. I'm still stuck in the same addictions, in the same patterns. Maybe this isn't true, this gospel thing. And so whatever your story, you might hide your doubts, you might stuff them, but we all have them. Many Christians, doubt, but doubt, again, is not a rejection of faith. Of course, there's an unhealthy doubt that leads to utter despair, uttered despondancy and indifference, or it leads you to a place of where you don't believe Jesus at all. And I would say in the, in a theological way, I wonder if that person was even saved in the first place, that that person had given his life to Jesus in the first place? But it means that in this context, doubt doesn't mean that you've rejected the gospel or that you've rejected God altogether. But what it is, is a hesitation in faith.

Doubt elsewhere in the Bible is described as a hesitation or a lack of confidence. And there are times, as Christians, you know, we are going to, you know, I believe lack confidence in the resurrection of Jesus and maybe what the Bible is teaching in different places. Converted people, that is people who have given their lives to Jesus and now are disciples of Christ, converted people can lack confidence. That is possible, friends. I've lacked confidence in what

the Bible teaches at times in my life as well. Heck, even as I'm walking up here, I'm like, God, I am so doubtful that you can use me.

God is still at work. Even Thomas's faith was shaken and diminished. I really think it's unfortunate that Thomas is infamous, he's notorious for this in John chapter 20. He's known for the yeah, for being called Doubting Thomas. But this is cool, did you know of that back in John chapter 11, he was actually the most courageous, the boldest, the confident of all the disciples? In John 11, Jesus wanted to go back to Judea because his good friend Lazarus had passed away. And all the other disciples were saying, don't go there. You're gonna die. They're gonna try to kill you. And John 11, verse 16:

"So Thomas, [this guy Thomas], called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go that we may die with him.'"

What? This guy's crazy! And so it was Thomas who said, let's go! We'll die with Jesus! Again, let's remember that Thomas is a disciple. He wasn't just a mere fan of Jesus. He followed Jesus, spent a lot of time with Jesus. He gave his devotion in life to the Savior. And you see that Thomas at one point, he was a passionate disciple of Jesus. And he moves from boldness and passion and courage to incredulity, this willful resistance and refusal to believe. How can he move from, "let us go and die with Jesus!" to "I will never believe." What happened? How does that happen? Well, you see, Thomas was, once again, the boldest, had the most confidence out of all the disciples it seems, but his faith was shaken and diminished. Why? Well, I think it's understandable because Jesus was just flogged and crucified. In other words, it rocked his world. Anybody have their worlds rocked in their life, when that news came of cancer or when you lost your job or something happened in your life and it rocked your world?

So I think we need to give Thomas some grace here. I think we, you need to give yourself a little grace if you find yourself doubting at times. And we definitely need to give others around us grace, for those who are doubting around us. Those who were once the boldest and the most confident in faith, you know, they can find themselves having a crisis in faith. Tim Keller, who is a well-known pastor, preacher, theologian, and writer of our day, he's speaking to believers by the way in the church. He says this, "Everyone thinks that they believe in the resurrection until they're told that they only have a few months to live." Tim Keller himself, who for decades preached on and defending the historicity of the resurrection in Scripture, found himself, get this struggling to believe in the reality of the resurrection when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

And he shares about this and how he doubted it. And it was hard for him to believe when he was facing death and his health was fading and declining. He wondered, is it real? Did it really happen? I mean, his faith was diminished and weakened, and that can happen to the best of us. And this pastor, Tim Keller, by the way, he's an incredible thinker, theologian of our day. He knew all the historical, rational, intellectual reasons why to believe in the resurrection. But we see that doubt is not just exclusively an intellectual issue. It's not just an information lapse because it's often, I would say, more emotional. It's personal. And so those who are doubting,

they don't just need another book to read. They don't just need more facts, although those can be helpful, but they need more than that.

And I used to give Thomas a hard time because he was actually there when Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead. This guy, this dude, he witnessed this incredible work of Jesus raising a dead man back to life. And I'm thinking, we, oh, bro, Thomas, you were there! You saw Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, and therefore in your framework now you know that dead people can come back to life. Dude, that's awesome! And so when the disciples said that what they saw, the risen savior, why was it so hard for you to believe? And again, it's because it's not just an intellectual or experiential issue. I don't think it's, it's more that, it's deeply personal here. I was thinking about this, reflecting on this. Thomas wasn't there when Lazarus died, nor did Lazarus die in such a horrific kind of death that Jesus died and get this. Lazarus was not as close to Thomas as Jesus was close to Thomas. I mean, Thomas, he lost a friend. He lost his mentor, he lost his teacher, he lost his rabbi, and he was following Jesus for three years. He committed a life, his life to him. And Jesus was crucified. And he hadn't seen him. And, and Thomas was, I'm sure, afraid, I think a lot of doubts to be based on fear. And there was that uncertainty in those days. He was probably reviewing the past few years in his entire life, like, what am I doing? What does life mean? What's gonna happen tomorrow? A lot of anxiety, a lot of worrying. And it's understandable why Thomas doubted.

And by the way, did you know that it wasn't just Thomas? Did you know that all of the disciples doubted? In fact, we should stop saying that it was only Thomas who doubted. I mean, he gets such a bad rap. The more I read about Thomas, the more I really dig this guy. If I had another son, I would name him Thomas, because Thomas is the man. Like people say, Doubting Thomas, Doubting Thomas. But all the disciples doubted. When Jesus appeared to the disciples and Thomas was not there eight days prior, the disciples all doubted. In Luke 24, verse 36 through 43, it says:

"As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace to you!' But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And Jesus said to them, 'Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts?'"

These suckers, man, like the other 10, doubted all the way to the point when Jesus revealed himself to them, they touched Jesus and he saw Jesus eat in front of them. And *then* they believed! It sounds a lot like Thomas, and that was what Thomas was looking for. It was a normative experience for hundreds of people post resurrection, pre ascension, because Jesus was still revealing himself to people. You see? So it's not just that the other disciples, maybe their faith was stronger than that of Thomas's faith. No, but here's the thing: they all wavered to believe. Even the inner circle of Peter, James and John. That's what doubt is, though, wavering to believe. And they all wavered. You and I waiver. You and I will waiver. We're going to waiver. Maybe you're wavering even now as you're sitting here. But I want you to know you're in the right place. This is the right place to be in the church as you wrestle with your doubts. But again, doubt doesn't mean that you don't have faith. It means that for some reason, your life is hard maybe, and you're struggling and you're fearful. And one plus one is

not equaling two. And you're trying to figure that out. But you can be a believer and struggle with doubt at the same time. So that's what doubt is.

But secondly, what do we do with our doubts? What to do with our doubt? If you're doubting, if you've ever doubted, what do you do? Number one, tell the truth about your doubt. Tell the truth about your doubt. In other words, I think we ought to be honest. Honest. And I love Thomas because Thomas is honest. We should change his name from Doubting Thomas to Honest Thomas. It rhymes. I like it. Honest Thomas. His doubt is not a great example, but how he deals with his doubt, I believe, namely his honesty, it's a great thing because dishonesty about doubt only makes things worse. So honesty is like what I think what we ought to do, because we ought to be real and just be genuine.

You know, if you're like me, it feels like, I don't know what the word is, dirty <laugh> to to doubt in the church. Ah, just not right. You know, you gotta fake it til you make it. Wear a mask, you know? And you gotta trick everybody. It feels like it's a lack of integrity or it lacks character to show up when you're cold or to show up when you are in a funk that feels really tough and rough, right? It feels like you're playing a game or pretending in the church. And of course, we wanna be confident, we wanna be like, you know, always on top of the mountain. We always wanna be like, I am full of confidence. I have faith, I can move mountains. Oh, hear me roar! I am, you know, like that's how we wanna feel all the time.

But let's get to the reality of our lives: We ain't like that. We struggle. We are fickle. We are up and down. Toss about what the winds and waves of whatever life throws at us. One moment we're doing great. Another moment, men, milk spills, pimples on your face. You're like hitting the dubs. You're like, life sucks! You know, next thing you get a promotion, oh, Jesus is great. Next thing you know, you get a car accident, Jesus, you are terrible. You're you full of doubt. You're going through a lot of things. We're so like conflicted. But we, like Thomas, we need to be in the presence of God's people experiencing the means of grace, his word, his sacraments, his people, even as we doubt. Even as we doubt. Church is the best place folks to, to doubt because of that collision: I believe, help my unbelief! Because who's gonna help us speak truth into us if not the church? Tim Keller again says this, this is lengthier. I apologize it's not on the screen, but it's so good that I gotta read it to you. Let me read this. Listen carefully:

"Faith without some doubt is like a human body without any antibodies in it. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do, will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a skeptic. A person's faith will collapse, can collapse almost overnight if she has failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection. Believers should acknowledge and wrestle with doubts not only their, not only their own, but their friends and neighbors as well. Because why? It is no longer sufficient to hold beliefs just because you inherited them. Only if you struggle long and hard with objections to your faith, will you be able to provide the grounds, the foundation for your beliefs to the world, the unbelieving world around you."

I can go on, there's so good stuff, but in other words, what he's saying is don't leave your doubts alone. Confront them, acknowledge them, be honest about them, wrestle with them, wrestle with them with other people. It's going to sharpen them as well. And I love that Thomas, he doesn't like lie about his doubts. He's there, right? And he's not saying like, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I believe even though I didn't see him. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I believe. He's not being disingenuous here. He's saying like, he's being totally honest: Unless I see his hands, unless I place my finger into the marks of the nails, I will never believe.

And as tough as that is for us to read that, man, he's honest Thomas. Honest Thomas, great. And as a church, let me just say this, Doxa, if you're part of our church Doxa, we should not fear people's doubts. Don't fear that your doubts are gonna become, that their doubts, excuse me, are gonna become your doubts and somehow derail your faith. As a community, we want to wrestle with them together. And what I think Tim Keller is saying is, faith is not blind. He's not saying believe just because just, you know, just believe. And if that's your approach to your belief, you're just gonna sink deeper into that. He's saying acknowledge them, wrestle with them, deal with them. A lot of people interpret what Jesus says at the end of John chapter 20 as blind faith. So he says in verse 29,

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

And so some people read this and say, there you have it, just believe. It's blind faith. We'll never see Jesus. But that's not what Jesus is talking about here. He's speaking specifically in that context. Blessed are those who have not seen him at that moment as a risen bodily savior and believe, in that moment. He's talking about us in the future. We haven't seen him in his bodily form. He's blessing us. And so, but that doesn't mean that there's nothing for us to see at all. In fact, I think there are many things for us to see, unlike the disciples in the gospel, they didn't have the full completed canon of scripture. They didn't have the full New Testament, but we do. And the work of the Holy Spirit through the scriptures points us to the reality of the resurrection and the gospel. But faith is not blind.

So, what do you do with your doubts? You tell the truth about your doubts, you be honest, be real. And we do so in community with friends in the church. I just wanna say, man, the greatest thing in my life when I go through hard times and struggles in my life when I have doubts, is when I met with brothers in my life through, you know, DNA or MCs or in the church. And I don't understand why when we are struggling, we run away from church when we should run to community instead. But we are called to do this, to be honest about our struggles in community and to speak, to be honest about the doubts that we have.

But the second thing is as well, I would say, is that we are called to tell your doubts about the truth. Not just, you know, tell the truth about your doubts to other people. And we ought to do that in our times of meeting together and doing life together over meals together. Share with one another. Man, I'm struggling, I'm wrestling. So tell the truth about your doubts. Be honest so we can pray for you so that we acknowledge that we can say, Hey, let me talk to you. Let me pray. Let's do this together. But secondly, tell your doubts about the truth. That's good. Tell the,

tell your doubts about the truth. The next thing you need to do is to tell your doubts about the truth, because you know that's important. What are some of the things that we can do here? What are some of the truths that we can tell our doubts? Well, first of all, we see Jesus pursuing Thomas, right?

So even eight days later, we see that Jesus seeks about, seeks the doubting one. He doesn't give up on Thomas. And that's the truth. He is the hound of heaven who does not give up on us even when we are running away. He pursues us. His love is an all-consuming, never ending, unstoppable love of God. So even in verse 26 and 27:

"Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. [I like that part, man, that's awesome.] And said, 'Peace be with you.' And then he said to Thomas, he said to Thomas..."

He addresses Thomas. I don't know why, eight days later, I don't know why there was a pause. Maybe Thomas was just running away. He didn't want to hear it. He was out doing things to get his mind off of what happened. But Jesus came and he looked at Thomas and addressed Thomas. He doesn't tell Thomas to leave or to get out because of his doubt. Thomas is pursued by Jesus. And that's a good thing for us to remember again and again because Jesus is okay with our doubts. And we need to remind ourselves that he's not offended or afraid of our doubts. Jesus is secure. He is the truth. And this truth that Jesus is persevering with us, he's patient with us. He is full of long suffering with us, helps us in our moments of doubt. I mean, how many times have you wanted to give up on a friendship or a marriage or a child? And you are absolutely spent and you are at the end of your strength in this relationship, and there's full of doubts that it can ever, you know, even work out or that there could be healing or reconciliation.

Well, Jesus doesn't ever give up. He pursues us even when we are doubting. Better yet, he pursued us even while we were yet enemies of the cross. And so we let that truth of God, of who God is and his persevering heart for us, fight our doubts and melt away any anger and resentment that we might have toward. But furthermore, Jesus gives what Thomas needs. And so for example, if you're feeling weak today and struggling with doubt, and you, I wanna say you are in great company, even the greatest Thomas says a strong statement, unless I can place my hand in his side, I will never believe. And if you read the text carefully, we actually don't know if Thomas took Jesus up on that offer and touched Jesus's hand. I wouldn't, I'd be like, Ugh, that's gross. Like, you know, is that your rib <laugh>?

But what we do know is that Jesus appears in their midst and gives to Thomas what he needs. He addresses Thomas precisely where his doubts are. He says in verse 27, to Thomas, put your finger here. See my hands. Put out your hands and place it in my side. And so Jesus' response is so telling about how the Bible views doubt, Jesus doesn't come and shame him. He doesn't come and scold him. He doesn't come and condemn it. He doesn't come and bring the hammer down on Thomas and his doubts. He says to all the disciples, including Thomas, peace be with you. He seeks to bring peace to the doubts of our hearts. And that's why I'm so grateful

that Thomas's doubts are here for us to see his real confusion, his real heart, his real questions. And I'm so grateful that they're here for us.

But more than that, I'm grateful for the way that Jesus responds. I'm grateful for the gentleness with which Jesus responds to the doubts and the patience that he provides for Thomas the peace that he gives to Thomas in this true and beautiful story. Consider Thomas respond to seeing Jesus. As you know, that Thomas is one of the only ones in the gospel of John to call Jesus God. Yeah. Yeah. I did my research, I did my homework. You see, throughout the gospel of John, Jesus regularly and repeatedly says extraordinary things about himself. So back in chapter 8, he said, if you have seen me, if you have seen me, you have seen God. In chapter 14. He says, if you know me, you know the Father. So Jesus plainly, regularly, repeatedly claims to be God. Thomas is one of the only ones in the gospel of John to call Jesus God.

In verse 28, he says, he's necessary these beautiful pronouns, these beautiful pronouns for us. He says, my Lord and my God. One commentator says that that is the highest statement of belief in the Gospels. And so Thomas chapter 11, let's go die with him. Chapter 20, unless I place my hands on his side, I would never believe. Thomas was a conflicted man. And so are we. We are conflicted men and women. Because the greatest doubt about isn't this great, but the greatest doubter, Doubting Thomas, becomes the greatest believer with the highest statement of belief in the gospels. Wow.

And here's how this applies to us. After you trust in Jesus, and as your savior and Lord, even after today, you will still face doubts over difficult problems in the Bible and in the world. Sometimes friends, I struggle with how a loving guy can allow all the evil that goes in the world, the headache, the heartache, the tragedy. It is too much. You know, it's just how can he allow kids to be abused and sold into sex trade or murdered? You know, I struggle with the fact that millions live and die and they never get to hear the Gospel. You know, I struggle with the doctrine of eternal punishment. The list can go on and on and on. But if Jesus has truly risen from the dead, then his claims are true. And all of those issues become of secondary importance. I can work on them over time. Some problems I may not resolve until I meet Jesus in glory, when I will get my new and glorified perfected body. I'm gonna be six foot six, muscles everywhere, a full set of hair. I don't know about you, but that's when Jesus would tell me all the answers that I have, all the questions that, all the answers to the questions that I have. But maybe you're thinking, you know, if I could have been there with Thomas and seen Jesus risen from the death, it would've been easier to overcome my doubts. But I've, but I've never seen Him. For you. Jesus speaks to Thomas the words of verse 28:

"Because you have seen me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see and yet believed."

That's us. Jesus pronounces a blessing on us who believe. John says this, at the end of John chapter 20 and pastor Eddie's gonna touch on this a lot more, but in verse 30 and 31,:

"Now Jesus did many other things in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in his book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

What John is saying is that Jesus, there's so many other things, more, so many more things that he did that are not recorded in the Bible. And I wanna say, man, I wanna see it all. I just need one more piece of evidence. I just need to see one more proof. But there's a point where you gotta say, more actually probably won't help. And John is saying, we actually have everything that we need to trust the brothers and sisters that God has placed in our lives, the word of God, that we have the Holy Spirit, which illuminates the word of God to convict us and convince us. And we need to pray maybe more earnestly that the Holy Spirit would open up our eyes and change our hearts. And so we need the church, we need the word, and we need the spirit. What do we need the church to do? In Jude chapter 1, verse 20. So Jude was another brother of Jesus in Jude 1:22, he says:

"Have mercy on those who doubt."

Have mercy on those who doubt. It's interesting, right? Jude doesn't say, have more proof for those who doubt, point a scripture to those who doubt, or give them a book to read or point them to a website to those who doubt. Isn't it interesting that Jude says, have mercy on those who doubt? Again, doubt is not just an intellectual deficiencies, it's emotional, it's personal. And I think for many who are doubting their faith or maybe deconstructing their faith, they're often in significant pain. A lot of people doubt because they're in a place of pain because they're experiencing some kind of hardship in their life. God doesn't feel real to them because of that. And they think, how can God be loving? How could Jesus be risen? How can God be sovereign? These, these thoughts often come from a place of brokenness and pain and suffering, which is why Jude says, what do they need?

Mercy. They need mercy. They need, they need community. They need brothers and sisters who will become compassionate, not to judge them, not to scorn them. Oh, you have doubt. What the heck is wrong with you? Get outta the church. You don't belong here. No, he doesn't do that. He gives, he says, give them mercy, grace, community, compassion, and walk that slow road with them and pray for them and care for them. I believe that's what they need. They need through the church and through you to know that God is loving.

As I close, I believe ultimately this is an invitation by Jesus to those who are doubting. It's an invitation to bring our doubts and our struggles to Jesus, an invitation of the touch and put our fingers into the wounds of the Savior, not physically, but spiritually and mentally and emotionally. In other words, to meditate deeply again and again, the cross and sacrifice of Jesus, to preach to yourself the gospel.

Doubt is a serious thing. So serious that Jesus descended into that darkness. God judges himself on the cross in our place in Christ. So you look to the calvary, you look to the cross. And when you doubt, when you cannot see, when you're in the dark, you always look there to Jesus. You

know, Jesus loves those who are doubting. And if you're doubting, if you're questioning your faith, if you're having a hard time, I want you to know, Jesus loves you. Charles Spurgeon, that Princeton preacher once said,

"The weakest lamb is as dear to him as the strongest in the flock."

And if that's you, if you're feeling like one of the weakest, I want to say to you that Jesus loves you just as much as he loves the strongest. And I think just knowing that I hope will bless you and encourage you and comfort you, and knowing that you are not alone in your doubts. And I encourage you to seek the one who is seeking you. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you that it is so relevant and relatable, and you know us so well. I wonder if some of us here are struggling with doubts. Maybe we're going through a hard time and we feel like one of those weak, weak lambs. And I think if we're honest with ourselves, we often feel so small, but very little faith. But remind us for God that you are, for us, not against us, and you pursue us. You remind us that the wounds are real. The nail scars, nail scarred hands are real. The side was pierced. All of that was there. Even after the resurrection, we noticed it's still there. And these beautiful scars, they're our trophies, they are our rewards, and they point us again to the reality of who you are and what you have done for us. Father, we pray that you would do a powerful, wondrous work in us. Even in the midst of our doubts. Use our weaknesses to bring glory to your name. In Jesus name, amen.