**Easter 2 Sermon: John 20:24-31**

"That You May Believe!"

 It’s been one week since Easter, one week since the chaos and excitement, one week since the empty tomb, one week since the news of Jesus Resurrection. Since the 10 eyewitnesses that actually saw him face to face! Yet, we find them in the same place they were Easter night. They are in the same room behind the same locked doors. Were there afraid! Yes! Did they have doubts? Yes! Will they Believe?

The answer to this question is found in our text for today. **These things were written;** "**That You May Believe!**

 Believers can doubt! Believers can be tempted. How? By fear and a lack of trust. It can lead to Doubt. Belief marred by doubt. It is toxic. It results in closed-mindedness, pride even laziness and ingratitude. In today’s world, among people who call themselves believers, or say they are spiritual, you don’t have to look far to find real doubt. “This story of the Resurrection can’t be true. It is a metaphor. A feel, good Story. I believe in God and his love buy this resurrection stuff is a bit too far. It can’t be True!”

 "Most Americans don't believe they will experience a resurrection of their bodies when they die, putting them at odds with a core teaching of Christianity—that Jesus physically rose form the dead!." As the report explain, "Only 36 percent of the 1,007 adults interviewed in a study 15 years ago by the Scripps Survey Research Center at Ohio University said "yes" to the question: "Do you believe that, after you die, your physical body will be resurrected someday?" Fifty-four percent said they do not believe, and 10 percent were undecided." And what do you think the statistics would say today? Doubt! Very real! Very Toxic indeed!

 How can Belief turn toxic with doubt? We have this vivid example in our lesson today. **19On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together behind locked doors because of their fear of the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you!” 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.**

**21Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! Just as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you.” 22After saying this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23Whenever you forgive people’s sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”**

**24But Thomas, one of the Twelve, the one called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So 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.”**

Doubt is toxic indeed. It is like a virus. And today we all are talking about the virus…covid 19. How is this virus toxic? When it attacks, our immune systems are designed to fight off the viruses. It protects us against the invader. It can even be helpful in stopping the virus. The soldier cells in the blood stream in to fight the virus. It often happens very quickly and efficiently. We notice only small signs that the system is working: We have a cold, a fever or a cough.

 But sometimes it can turn against us. At a certain point, response can be so strong that its effect can be counterproductive. The soldier cells can enter our lungs to become inflamed. Then breathing becomes difficult. And in the worst case, ventilation may be necessary. And in some cases, it leads to death! This seems to be the case with the novel coronavirus. Our own immune response can fight against us. !

 And that is exactly what can happen with our natural, (immune) the response to Belief. Our sinful nature. It is toxic.! Our natural response to what we have in the Resurrection Story is the same as Thomas’. The Devil, the world and our sinful nature it strong. It comes at us will full force! It tells us; “If I cannot see it with my own eyes, touch it with my hands and experience it for real…then it is not true. I do not believe. I will not believe”

 So, what is the answer? Doubters can believe! **26After 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. 27Then 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.”**

**28Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”**

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

 Poor Doubting Thomas!  He has borne the brunt of almost two thousand years of bad press because of His skepticism about the resurrection and Jesus' appearance to the other disciples. I would suspect that any one of us would have said the same thing if we had not been present at the first appearing! But I do not look down on Thomas. Instead I am thankful for him. Because he is me! I doubt. I question! I am filled with that toxin. And Only Jesus has the answer.

 So, what did Thomas receive! The doubter believed! How was that possible? Jesus came to take away to toxin. The doubt. And he replaced it with faith! We need Jesus! We need what he did for us. Look at his hands, his side! His wounds! He shed his blood, there on the cross! "**He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."** (1 Peter 2:24)

 The blood [treatment](https://www.foxbusiness.com/category/health-care)! Plasma Transfusion! Have you heard of it! It works by taking donated blood from someone who has recovered from the coronavirus -- and giving it to a critically ill patient. When someone has recovers from this disease, they have antibodies that their body has built against that disease. The blood plasma contains antibodies that can kill the virus. This is a treatment they are not trying on the coronavirus.

 The blood treatment is what we also need for the virus of doubt. The only way to get rid of the toxin. Sin! Jesus. Look, at his hands and at his side! Look! Can you see it!

 You might say that was easy for Thomas. He was there. Right there. Jesus came to him. He got to see it. In fact, he may even taken Jesus up on the offer to touch the very holes in his hands and the scar on his side. But I cannot. Oh, how I wish I could. See Jesus! Touch Jesus. Hear Jesus! So how do you expect me to believe! Well, here comes the grates miracle of them all! **We can!**

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

**30Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book. 31But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

Say what you like, I think of Thomas as a hero of the Bible.  He demonstrates for us that the faith of the early Christians was not wishful thinking. They were not gullible.  It was based on facts. He had the real evidence, right there in front of him. Hard evidence!  And Thomas got it and believed!  Doubt to belief! My Lord and My God!

And we have it to! Where? **31But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

* **Christ’s resurrection is a big deal;**
* **The empty tomb is a life changing event;**
* **The resurrection does make a difference in our lives;** .

 So, if you’re dealing with loneliness, sorrow or loss. That’s when Jesus comes with his blood. He enters the locked room and says; **“Peace be with you,”**. If you are locked in a house of fear, confusion, or darkness. Jesus comes right in to the very place we are and stands right in front of us. If you feel lost, betrayed, disappointed, overwhelmed, he says, reach out and touch me….

 How is this possible? When we hear what says in his Word. What is written! That we may Believe. We are blessed! **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** The Miracle of Faith! Comes by hearing the message and the message is found in the Word of Christ! He comes with the message of hope, joy, and celebration. “**I am the Resurrection and the Life!** **AMEN**