

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus with Our Doubt: "I will never believe."

Focus Passage: John 20:24–30

Larger Context: Peter's three denials of Jesus on the eve of His crucifixion and Jesus' previous two post-resurrection appearances

Other Passages Referenced: Luke 1:1–4; 24:13–35; John 14:1–6

Comments to Leaders

- This week's message is an open and direct invitation to talk about questions and doubts. If someone begins to share about either, make sure to not rush through that part. Also try to shield the questioner/doubter from well-meaning believers who may have words of "encouragement" that discourage their honest questions.
- As more and more people are getting vaccinated and pandemic concerns lessen, please join me in praying that the LORD will raise up new small group leaders and that we will move with the Spirit in terms of small groups ministry. God has been doing something new. I welcome any insights you may have as to what that might mean for small groups.

Sermon Recap

The sermon began with an acknowledgement that everyone has questions and then asked members of the congregation, "What's your question?" In John 20 we meet a man named Thomas who is asking the ultimate question: "Was Jesus raised from the dead?" Thomas models a journey of faith as he progressed from "I will never believe 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" (John 20:26), to later call Jesus, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

The first step of the journey involved listening to the testimony of the eyewitness. Second, although Thomas had not seen the resurrected Jesus earlier with the other disciples, Thomas continued to spend time with them. This allowed Thomas to investigate their claims over time as well as to observe how their claims of encountering the resurrected Jesus impacted their lives. If you have questions, accept the Chapel's invitation to spend time with us to further investigate the claims you hear us make about Jesus and to see the impact it has on our lives. Thomas' continued time with the other disciples also demonstrated how determined he was to have his questions answered. How determined are you to address your questions?

Thomas took a third step in his spiritual journey of faith when he dropped all the conditions he had previously voiced as necessary in order for him to believe. What conditions have you placed on God as prerequisites to believe? The sermon suggested, "many of us say, 'I must live the way I want. I must watch what I want to watch, post what I want to post. I must keep my same views on human sexuality, the poor, the environment. I must not slow down my career. It must not cost me too much.' Thomas' *god* was certainty. Often our *gods* are freedom, success, or comfort."

As you consider your next step on the journey of faith, the gospel message declares that in Jesus, God has taken the first step toward us. The word—*logos*—became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Jesus did that in order to live the life we were meant to live and to die the death we deserved to die. "John is saying the Word, the Logos, the logic that holds the frame of the universe together—the logic that is the answer to all your questions—is not a philosophy or a principle, or even a religion; it's a person." Without Jesus journey to us, we would be unable to journey to faith on our own.

Interpretation Helps

- "In the Greek language, tense is very important. The word translated **told** in verse 25 appears in the imperfect tense. The disciples *kept on telling* Thomas they had seen the Lord."¹

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Ask if anyone would share how they've been hearing and obeying God's direction.

Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

READ John 20:24–30

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. How did Jesus respond to Thomas' conditions for believing when Jesus appeared to the disciples again when Thomas was with them?
4. Who does Jesus declare as "blessed" in John 20:29?

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. If you are already a follower of Jesus, what were some questions you had to wrestle with before you came to faith? ... If you are not yet a confirmed follower of Jesus, can you share any unanswered questions standing between you and faith? Whether a believer or not yet believer, were your questions more logical in nature or more emotional?
2. Did hearing the testimonies of other Christians impact your journey of faith?
3. Did seeing the impact faith had on the lives of others, impact your journey of faith?
4. Which, if any, of the conditions mentioned in the sermon do you find yourself practically imposing on God in our demands for freedom, success, or comfort?
 - a. know why God allowed _____ to happen
 - b. live the way I want
 - c. watch what I want to watch
 - d. post what I want to post
 - e. not give up your views on human sexuality, even in places they do not align with God's teaching
 - f. not give up my views on the poor, even in places they do not align with God's teaching
 - g. not give up my views on the environment, even in places they do not align with God's teaching
 - h. not slow down my career

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

What We Hope Members Glean from the Passage

1. No set answer.
2. No set answer.
3. Jesus invited Thomas to touch His wounds.
4. Jesus says those who believe without seeing are blessed.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES: Click [here](#) for some good opportunities.

¹ Kenneth O. Gangel, [John](#), vol. 4, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 372.