

SUNDAY, April 7, 2024 "When I Need A Miracle"

Acts 4:32-35 | John 1:1-2:2 | John 20:19-31

Jesus is alive! Our Creed states. "We believe in God.. who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh. Then it says we are called to be the church... to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen!" So we believe in God who was born into human existence in Jesus and who died on the cross and was buried. And as a church we are to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ! The question is do you believe this? Or maybe one should be asking do you put your faith in Jesus and believe?

A part of this belief question is whether you believe that Jesus rose to life again and was seen by others. Because if we believe this then we need to state, we believe in miracles because our human understanding of death and life does not explain Jesus' resurrection. We must deem it to be a miracle!

Do you believe in miracles? To answer this question we must define what a miracle is. Last time this definition was shared: "a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency. " Another definition for "miracle" is an extraordinary event taken as a sign of the supernatural power of God. Or an extremely outstanding or unusual event thing or accomplishment.

As Christians we believe because the story has been shared repeatedly for generations, and the Spirit is alive in us through faith. But this was not the case for all the disciples, the day of Jesus' resurrection. Early that morning Mary had seen Jesus and he spoke to her in the garden. She went and told the disciples. Angels told them that Jesus was amongst the living. But it was not until the evening of the same day when the disciples were together in a house with door locked. The disciples were together except Thomas. Jesus came amongst them and stood there. He offered a greeting of peace as they were terrified of what they now could see was Jesus in their midst. He then showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced. He again offered a greeting of peace as they now believed him to be Jesus. He also breathed on them and they received the Spirit of God.

What was occurring in this moment? The disciples accepted Jesus being alive and in their midst and that the Spirit of God was with him as he shared blessings of the Spirit with those present. Was this a miracle that Jesus came into the house through locked doors? How could he breathe on the disciples? He had to be alive as we define life—through breath and

breathing and yet he was also spirit—going through locked doors- and invoking God’s Spirit upon them. Jesus’ Easter miracle was still occurring!

Later on Thomas met with the disciples and they told him about seeing Jesus. And it is then that Thomas earns his nickname, because he states, I doubt it! Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” Thomas did not believe it- even though 10 of his closest friends whom he trusted with his life told him what and who they had seen and experienced. How could Thomas have doubts?

We know that there are skeptics in our world about many issues and concerns which have been proved both real and hurtful. When Covid19 was first experienced skeptics said it would not be a problem for the world as it had been contained in one area. Even when the virus started spreading, skeptics doubted whether it was real. When more and more people were sick and dying still people were skeptical about its existence. Yet we know that many people became ill and died from this previously unknown virus. But remember also, there are people still searching for what was once a myth alone—bigfoot, lock ness monster. Yet when Thomas says I have to see Jesus to believe, we know that something good will occur¹

About one week later again the disciples were together in the house and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked and Jesus came and stood amongst them. He said, “Peace be with you.” Looking at Thomas he said, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach here and touch my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Did Thomas believe? Did he believe in Jesus’ Miracle? Yes! Thomas said, “My Lord and my God! Jesus then teaches all who are listening, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe!’”

Thomas did not ‘get what the disciples had shared with him. He didn’t believe what they said to him about Jesus being alive until he saw and touched Jesus himself. What Thomas the disciples experienced was a suspension miracle because they were astonished yet observed something amazing about God This suspension miracle stopped a natural principle—death had occurred for Jesus, he was buried in a tomb and laid to rest. But because he was seen by the disciples within hours after his resurrection, the natural laws of life leading to death was stopped.

When we think about life on earth, we measure each person’s life between dates of birth and death. But when we think about Jesus’ life—we kind of celebrate his birthday on Dec. 25 yet

only remember his death as part of the yearly remembrance celebration of his Passion. Because we as Christians are an Easter people and focus on Jesus Resurrection- his earthly life only stopped for less than 3 days but Jesus lives again and because of this earth can breathe again knowing that the gift of eternal life was and is possible because Jesus lives. Jesus who died lives.

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:17-22 why the resurrection miracle is so central to Christianity: "...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep or died in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive." Paul states that if we are in Christ we will live.

The early church believers wholeheartedly believed in Jesus' resurrection because as they shared this story of new life and resurrection of Jesus, people believed and shared all that they had for the sake and need of other people. (Acts)

Thomas was sincere as he pledged to follow Jesus, yet he fought with uncertainties and questions. This story is about faith with a bit of doubt thrown in because it is Thomas' confession of faith comes at what is thought to have originally been the end of the gospel. John's gospel reads "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God". And now, with Thomas's words, "My Lord and my God". It is Thomas who is the first person in the gospel to address Jesus as God. John's purpose in writing the gospel, is that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God". With Thomas' words, the purpose is fulfilled.

With doubt and belief in the miracle of Jesus' resurrection, Thomas makes it a courageous act to live in the presence of mystery. Questioning is essential to the life of faith. As Christians, we need to ask questions, find answers and search for the joy of Jesus. To doubt, to ask and have faith is living God's way. We learn from this story of Thomas that faith in the Risen Christ is pure gift that is shared amongst us a church. "You cannot have faith without the community of believers and its tradition, any more than you can have a human being without human society and human history." In believing, we believe what the church believes and what this is what is handed on from generation to generation.

The first witnesses to the Resurrection spoke not just of seeing the Risen Christ, but of what had happened to them, how their lives had been changed because they had seen him. But

in the end Thomas's words, "My Lord and my God", show a clear profession of love and faith. St. Augustine states, "*By believing, we love him, esteem him and are incorporated into him*". Faith is much more than knowing about God: it is knowing, and being known, by God.

Thomas was overwhelmed when he said, 'My Lord and my God'. Later on ; or when St Francis of Assisi said, 'My God and my All'. Or as expressed by the Welsh poet, R. S. Thomas (1913-2000) in these lines from *Suddenly*, *I looked at him, not with the eye only, but with the whole of my being, overflowing with him as a chalice would with the sea.*

Do you need a miracle right now? And is the miracle you seek in Jesus the Risen Christ? Thomas was skeptical, but faithful, questioned his support of Jesus and wondered where he was going before his death. In John 14 Jesus said, "You know the way to the place where I am going." "Lord," said Thomas, "we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Had Thomas fully understood then what Jesus meant? Or was he waiting on Jesus' Easter miracle to bring his faith back to life?

Maybe we all need a miracle at some time to simply jump start and renew our faith. If it weren't for miracles we would not grow to the point where we could walk in the blessings of God. Many people believe in Miracles, and that God does miracles, but simply believing god is able to do it is not enough. We need to have faith in God and believe. We need to say Thomas' words with conviction, "My Lord and my God." For when we faith in God, miracles will happen when we need them and when others see them, our faith will grow.

Let us pray

God of grace we praise you and thank you for miracles. Help us to know you and love you. Enable us to say with faith My lord and my God. Thank you Jesus Amen. .