Doubting Thomas

1. Opening: The Résumé and the Nickname

- Thomas heals the sick. Casts out demons. He is part of the outpouring of Pentecost. Helped spread the Gospel.
- Little is known about his missionary journeys. While the other apostles stayed closer to home, Thomas went East.
- Tradition tells us that in 72 AD Thomas was martyred in India by a spear for not giving up faith in Jesus. He was first to bring Christianity to the far east.
- And for all this he gets the nickname of… Doubting Thomas.
- How does a man go from doubting to dying by a spear for Jesus?

2. He did not always have doubts

John 11:14-16 Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. **15** And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." **16** Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

- This is courage. This is tremendous faith
- Thomas knew what could happen.
- The others tried to talk Jesus out of going

3. The Doubt

But then there is this passage:

John 20:24-25 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

- The other disciples believed because they had seen. Thomas… was not with them when Jesus came.
- (BTW - the others doubted too)

    - **Luke 24:38-41** And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? **39** Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." **40** When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. **41** But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"
    - Thomas isn't uniquely a doubter, he just said it out loud.
- Why was Thomas refusing to believe here?
- His whole life was turned upside down. He had given everything to follow Jesus.
- (Well, so had the others) Everyone is different and processes differently.
- Jesus had been ripped away from him. His life was completely wrapped up in Jesus, and now that is gone. What is next?
- **Doubt is not a sign that you are wrong, it is a sign that you are thinking.**
- Thomas did not let his doubt stop him. Expressing that doubt is not the same as giving up.

4. Jesus Meets Thomas in His Doubt

John 20:26-28 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

- 8 days later, in spite of doubts, Thomas showed back up.
- Jesus knew of Thomas' doubt. Jesus gave Thomas what he needed.
- Thomas' reply – "My Lord and my God" – shows his commitment.
- **Look at Jesus' reply, though:**

- **John 20:29** Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
- Jesus is preparing Thomas for a time when he would not be able to see Jesus.

5. Flashback: Why Jesus Was Preparing Him

Go back with me to the upper room, the night before the cross.

John 14:1-6 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. [2] In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. [4] And where I go you know, and the way you know." [5] Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" [6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

- I don't think Thomas was happy to think of Jesus going away. "How will we find You?"
- Thomas has lived very faithfully for Jesus these past 3 years. But his faith seems to be wrapped up in the physical Jesus.
- Jesus has been preaching that His life is to be in all of us.
- Thomas only had faith to believe in Jesus when he could see Jesus.
- The time was coming when he would not see Him physically. Jesus needed to prepare him for this.

6. You Are Not the Only One

- Do you wonder if you are the only one with doubts?
- Questions you can't answer

- Situations that seem unfair
- Hurts you can't resolve
- You should feel safe to ask any question, or express doubt – to God and to us. The church and the home should be the safest place to ask hard questions.
- Sometimes our faith is so strong. Sometimes it is less so.
- There is no such thing as arriving at full faith. You don't graduate from faith academy.

Faith is not the absence of doubt. Faith is the means to push through doubt.

- Doubts can draw you closer to God. If we pursue the root of our doubt, Jesus will respond.
- Doubts do not disqualify us:
- **Matthew 28:16-17** Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. [17] When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.
- The disciples could see Jesus – after the resurrection – and still doubted.
- Yet Jesus still gave the great commission to them anyway.
- Don't condemn yourself for having doubt.

7. So Going Back to Thomas… Three Steps Through Doubt

- How did he go from doubting when Jesus was not there to becoming a martyr in India?
- First, let's see what brought him to the point of finally expressing his doubt.

Step 1 – Go where faith is.

- **John 20:19-22** Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." [20] When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad

when they saw the Lord. [21] So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." [22] And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

- Thomas missed this. He missed being in the presence of Jesus, and he missed Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit on them.
- Missing this time led to the next part – where he doubted. He was probably already doubting here; his doubt could have ended sooner.
- Don't miss His presence.
- **Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, [25] not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.
- I hope being around people in your church family stirs up faith in you.
- I hope that when you are with me and Tina that you walk away with faith.

Step 2 – Voice it to Jesus and to safe people.

Matthew 11:2-3 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples [3] and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

- Even John the Baptist, in prison, asked the question – and he took it to Jesus.
- Turning away from Jesus and your community will not help. Turn towards Him.

Personal story*: asking if there is more – God answering through community.*

Step 3 – Don't let circumstances dictate what you believe.

- Thomas' faith was based on Jesus' physical presence. Jesus wanted his faith based on His Spirit in him.

- His circumstances said "Jesus is dead and gone." Jesus invited him to believe beyond what he could see – "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Bad or uncomfortable circumstances do not indicate that God is not there. They may even indicate He is doing something.

- **James 1:2-4** My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. [4] But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Psalm 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

- **Going to Jesus – even in doubt – is what we need.**

8. Closing: The Payoff

Acts 1:12-14 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. [13] And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. [14] These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Thomas dealt with his doubt:

- He stayed with the disciples even while experiencing doubt.
- He voiced his doubts.
- When Jesus came in, he immediately went to Him.
- Jesus ascended – physically left again. And Thomas keeps believing.

CALLBACK: The man in that upper room is the same man who, decades later, would not give up his faith at the point of a spear in India.

Close: If you doubt, question, struggle, have sin you can't overcome – take it to Jesus.