

EASTER 2 ST PAUL'S RONDEBOSCH 2021

Acts 4:32 – 35; Ps 133; 1John 1: 1 – 2:2; John 20 19 – 31

TO ENCOURAGE US TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Rand 5 in my closed hand) Would you believe me if I told you I had 5 Rand in my hand? Hands up those who believe me. Those who do not believe me hands up. What would I have to do to show it is true? I would have to open my hand and show you the 5 rand. (open hand with 5 rand).

We have all heard the phrase SEEING IS BELIEVING.

How many of you believe in Jesus? How many of you have seen Jesus?

The question put to us today is HAVE WE NOT SEEN? DO WE NOT BELIEVE?

We all remember Thomas as the one who doubted and we know he did doubt. Yet Thomas was the one who, when Lazarus was ill and dying, said “ Let us all go with the teacher, so that we may die with him.” The other disciples did not want to go as the crowds had said they would stone Jesus the previous time they were there. Thomas at that point had faith in Jesus.

However, when Jesus died, Thomas' faith, like the others, was shattered. When the other disciples said they had seen Jesus, Thomas doubted totally, “ Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my fingers on the scars and put my hand in his side, I will NOT believe” . Thomas' faith In Jesus was shattered .

Then Jesus appears in their midst and tells Thomas to touch him, “Stop your doubting and believe”. Jesus met Thomas where he was to help him see again. Thomas did not need to touch Jesus' wounds.

Thomas responds, MY LORD AND MY GOD

MY LORD – Thomas is now as satisfied as the other disciples.

MY GOD – Thomas goes a step further. He knows he is in the presence of God .This is a wonderful leap of faith leading Thomas to total belief in God.

HAVE WE NOT SEEN? DO WE BELIEVE?

What we need to understand is that faith is not the opposite of doubt. The opposite of faith is a life of despair and hopelessness. The opposite of doubt is a willingness to believe anything and everyone.

As SAMUEL MILLER says FAITH WITHOUT SKETICISM IS NOT FAITH. IT IS SUPERSTITION.

In many ways faith and doubt go hand in hand. As Bakole Wa Lunge says

FAITH IS NOT A MOMENTARY FEELING. II IS A STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DISCOURAGEMENT THAT THREATENS US EVERY TIME WE MEET WITH RESISTANCE.

HAVE WE NOT SEEN? DO WE BELIEVE?

It seems to me that we can identify three stages in belief in Jesus.

1. I DO NOT BELIEVE. This is true for many people in the world today – for those who have not met Jesus. Also many people are like Thomas “Experience has hurt too deeply” as Herb O’Driscoll writes! Sometimes when we are betrayed by loved ones, by our work, even by the church. We feel that it is impossible to trust or to believe again. For someone who has once believed this is an extremely difficult place to be. For all of us COVID 19 has had devastating effects.No more are people numbers but are faces. People have been led to say GOD DOESN’T CARE.

2. PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BELIEVE BUT DON’T. Thomas wants to believe he really does. He would love to believe as the others. But he cannot take that step. He needs proof.

3.LEAP OF FAITH “My lord and my God. Jesus offers Thomas proof but Thomas did not need any proof . He says immediately MY LORD AND MY GOD.

At which stage are you?

1. I DO NOT BELIEVE – Doubting Jesus is really with us after all we can’t see Jesus. Our world is in such a sorry state. Where is Jesus?
2. Maybe WE WANT TO BELIEVE. We know that others trust Jesus and believe his promises
3. BEING ABLE TO CONFESS OUR COMMITMENT as MY LORD AND MY GOD

We today face the questions

HAVE WE NOT SEEN? DO WE NOT BELIEVE?

We have seen so much more than Thomas. We have the records of the disciples in .the gospels and the early church. We’ve witnessed the way Jesus heals today both physically and emotionally. We have seen the change Jesus brings in the life of people. Hopefully we have met Jesus in our own lives, in the Eucharist and in other people. HAVE WE NOT SEEN?

DO WE BELIEVE? DO OUR ACTIONS SHOW THAT WE BELIEVE?

At whatever point we are we are encouraged today to take the leap of faith and, like Thomas say to Jesus MY LORD AND MY GOD and allow Jesus to direct our lives in all we do.

THANKS BE TO LORD JESUS CHRIST

THANKS FOR ALL THE BENEFITS YOU HAVE WON FOR US

THANKS FOR ALL THE PAINS AND INSULTS YOU HAVE BORNE FOR US

O MOST MERCIFUL REDEEMER FRIEND AND BROTHER

MAY WE KNOW YOU MORE CLEARLY, LOVE YOU MORE DEARLY AND FOLLOW YOU MORE NEARLY DAY BY DAY. AMEN (Sir Richard of Chichester)