April 26th 2020 Sermon Notes

Have you ever felt like you missed out? That everyone has heard or seen, or done something and you haven’t had the same experience? These days there’s FOMO - Fear Of Missing Out - a defined characteristic that drives some people, it seems, to always want to do everything, in case the one time they are not there, or not in the centre of things is the one time that something truly special happens.

I wonder if it was like that for Thomas. What was he doing at the time when Jesus first appeared to the disciples? I think it’s funny that when he first appears, the disciples are terrified, but he soon convinces them, and then, if it was me at least, when telling Thomas about what had happened there would be a slightly superior tone to things as they said ‘we’ve seen the Lord’. Thomas must have thought they were mad, or playing games, having him on and he says, ‘unless I see for myself, unless I put my hands in his wounds, I won’t believe.’ Thomas gets a bad reputation down through history for not believing straight away, but I don’t see anywhere here that Jesus condemns him for his doubts.

Jesus instead actually invites him to gain confidence in his faith by seeing proof that Jesus is really there, that Jesus really did rise from the dead, that he really is the Messiah that has been waited for for so long. Thomas is bowled over. ‘My Lord and my God’ he says. He has the proof he needs to put his trust in God. Jesus doesn’t condemn his need of proof, he just says, ‘how much more blessed are people who have not seen this proof but still believe anyway’. That’s us and people like us who’ve lived in the years since these events happened. We have to trust even though we’ve never seen the physical, risen Jesus in the flesh. It can be tough to trust in something you can’t see - people can think you’re mad, or worse. But if you know, you know, that’s what I reckon. If you’ve met Jesus, you know it - imagine being Saul on the Road to Damascus and trying to pass off his experiences as anything other than an encounter with the Lord.

I wonder, as I’m talking, can you think of a time when you knew God had done something in your life? When you knew you were seeing God do something?

I think it’s easy for us to forget that Jesus, as well as being the greatest person ever to live, had power from God the Father to transform the course of history. When Thomas exclaimed, ‘my Lord and my God’ I think Jesus had transformed in his vision from being an incredible teacher, prophet, doer of good deeds and miracles, into being the long-awaited saviour for both Thomas and for the whole world. In his vision, Thomas was seeing incredible expanded ideas of who this Jesus was and how nothing could ever be the same again. In order to get there, Jesus was willing to prove himself to him. What a gift Jesus gave to his friend.

So, I don’t think calling Thomas ‘doubting’ is really fair. Particularly i the way that he has been criticised through history for not catching on quicker.

He was a questioner, a seeker after truth and on this day, Jesus gifted him with the answers that he had been seeking. But He was allowed to question, to seek an answer for himself.

What stops you being all-in with Jesus? What are you holding on to, keeping back for yourself, in case on the smallest of off-chances it turns out that metaphorically speaking, you backed the wrong horse?

It would be easy for us to doubt and to question at the moment. People have found it easy to doubt and question God throughout history, but times like we are living through now, when we don’t know what is around the corner - no doubt you’ve had the odd moment of questioning and doubt in the last month or two.

I think that’s ok. Other pastors and preachers might not, but I like questions, and doubts. They prove that we are looking for answers, that we are trying to get to a point where our level of trust and acceptance of the truth of God and His love leads us to a moment, or several moments of being lost in wonder exclaiming ‘my Lord and my God’. That’s what Jesus was offering Thomas and hoping for, I believe, that he would ultimately worship God the Father for the glorious things he had done through Jesus and was going to do through the disciples now that they had been sent ‘as the Father sent me’ as we discussed last week.

If we are Christians, little Christs, if we trust God with our lives, through the twists and turns and joys and sorrows, we are the safest and secure we could possibly be. We have strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. We know that we have a heavenly family now, that God is building a kingdom of power and praise through his people and that we have an eternal home with him as members of his family. Not just enough to get through today but an eternal gift of hope that God will never take back from us once we have received it.

Trust God. Go all in. And then be like the disciples who, having met the risen Jesus, tore around the known world proclaiming that Jesus was alive, death was defeated, fear had no place amongst us, that love has won, is still winning and will continue to win now and forever. God is love, and those who live in love live in God lives in them, goes the phrase at the beginning of a wedding service. What’s the reason? One day the Wedding Feast of the Lamb will take place. It’s not talked about much, but it’s coming. We are the bride of Christ - the ones he loves, those he fought for and won. He will see us through, all the way, to the place where we, like Thomas, will have our dreams come true, all our hopes realised and will be able to exclaim, my Lord and my God. John’s purpose in writing his book is the end of our reading today. What is it? So that we might believe thatJesus Christ is the Messiah, the Saviour, the holy one of God sent to forgive and free us and change the course of history. He did it. My Lord and my God. To the glory of God the Father.

Amen