

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

John 20 : 24 – 29

6th May 2020

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “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.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*

What sort of person are you? How would other people describe you? How would you like to be remembered I wonder? What is it that defines you?

I always feel sorry for Thomas, that he is remembered as “doubting” to the point that he is rarely referred to without the epithet “doubting” added to his name. In the gospels, where they want to clearly identify him he is referred to as “Didymus”, the twin (although we have no idea who his sibling was).

So what do we know about him, other than he had a twin brother or sister? He was one of Jesus’ closest followers, one of the 12 Apostles. We also know that he had a degree of boldness and was not afraid to speak up. It was Thomas who encouraged the apostles to go with Jesus to the tomb of Lazarus, recognising that they could be risking their lives by doing so.

We also know that Thomas was the one who voiced what the other disciples were probably thinking when he stepped forward and questioned Jesus (John 14 v 5), asking Him to clarify exactly where He was going and what was the way they must follow. It was therefore Thomas who helped John to capture those words of Jesus “*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no-one comes to the Father except through Me*”

Thomas was one of only seven of the disciples who had the privilege of being chosen to be with Jesus on the shoreside after His resurrection.

Yet Thomas was not with the others when Jesus appeared. He was somewhere else when Jesus defied locked doors and entered the room where they were holed up in the few days following the Resurrection, maybe keeping their heads down from the hue and cry around the disappearance of Jesus’ body.

Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson



[The PCC of St John's and St Leonard's is a Registered Charity - No. 1131545]

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

He was completely dependant on what others were telling him. That is never the same as seeing or experiencing something yourself. Shared photographs or accounts on the phone might bring pleasure to those locked down, but it is not the same as being there.

We are all dependant on what the government and media tell us about this terrible pandemic, and they tell us that the measures in place must “follow the science” but that is not the same as being able to meet the people who do know and understand what is going on. Yet we sift the evidence and the reports, come to our own conclusions, and wait to discover what will happen and when.

As we approach the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of VE Day I was reminded of one comment by a soldier serving in the Far East that they heard about VE Day, but they were still engaged in operations on a daily basis. It was all hearsay as far as they were concerned. That must have been the same for many, in Ravensbruck, in France, in Poland. They would experience the end of war eventually, but in their isolation from their homes and families they did not yet know how or when.

But Thomas was there a week later. He had expressed his frustration at the lack of evidence. It was not that the penny had not dropped as Phil wrote about last week for those going to Emmaus; Thomas wanted to examine the evidence for himself. For him testing the evidence was really important to his belief.

Jesus knew that.

Jesus did not tell Thomas off, He invited him, knowing his need for confirmation – “*come and see ... you can now put aside your doubts and believe*”. To which Thomas’ response was “*My Lord and My God*”. the first to openly acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and God.

It has been said that “there is no believing without doubting”. There is nothing wrong with asking questions, gathering the evidence, through testimony of others, through the Bible, through prayer; through listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and in how we have seen God acting in His world. John reminds us (v31) that he wrote his Gospel account so that we “*might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*”

The disciples were locked in, but they shared what they knew, what they had experienced with one another and with others. How can we share what we know and have experienced with others in our time of isolation? Will we find a way of giving testimony to God’s action, to His consolation whether over the garden fence queueing at the shops, by phone or internet?

We can be encouraged by the bold, questioning Thomas’ actions, and Jesus’ words

Let us remember, whatever our situation at this time, we are defined by Jesus and our relationship with Him.

David Lambert

Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson



[The PCC of St John's and St Leonard's is a Registered Charity - No. 1131545]