**Twelve – Wk 9 – Thomas – The Doubter - Easter**

**Happy Resurrection Sunday- we are walking in the disciples' footsteps.**

**They were not the most qualified, but God took these ordinary people and did extraordinary things.**

**Luke 6:12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas the son (brother) of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**

**Today, Thomas, whose name is often synonymous with doubt.**

**The questioning disciple, best known for doubting the resurrection**

**Maybe that’s you? Have you ever doubted that it’s made up?**

**A hoax/legend/scam? Like the Easter bunny, fun to believe in. Sadly, most of us live like it never happened.**

**What we know (from the Gospels) – about Thomas**

* **Other than being named in the 12, all we know about him is in John**
* **He walked with Jesus and saw miracles, healing, deliverances, and knew the word of God from the mouth of God himself – Jesus.**
* **He was not the only disciple to struggle with doubt (Matt 8:26, 11:2-6, 14:31, 17:20, 28:17, Mark 4:39-40, 9:14-29, 16:13, Luke 8:24-25, 24:36-39)**
* **He asked the question that led to one of the greatest verses in NT:**

**(Jesus explaining that he is about to leave, but will be back to take him to where he is going) John 14:5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

* **He boldly stated he was ready to die with Jesus and challenged the others to join him. He was convinced Jesus was the Messiah.**

**John 11:14 So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”**

**He was not a lightweight; he was a true believer and had a deep love for Jesus! You can imagine his devastation when Jesus was crucified. Thomas, like others, found resurrection hard to believe. He couldn’t wrap his head around it.**

**The resurrection is the most crucial moment in history, without it the cross is just a sad story and we are wasting our time - 1 Cor 15:14 If Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless. 15 And we apostles would all be lying about God, for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave, but that can't be true if there is no resurrection… 17 And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still in your sins. 18 In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished!**

**If it's true, it is the centerpiece of God’s Kingdom and his plan to restore a broken world.**

**Some say he was just a historical carpenter crucified for going against the establishment. Some say he never died at all - or stayed in a tomb.**

**After all, how could a convicted, condemned, & executed man unleash for two millennia the power to change lives? It all comes down to this:**

**God created man to walk with Him and know Him. Adam decided to walk alone, and man’s walk with God was lost. Man has ever since battled sin, sickness, war, and the grave. We now hide from God and struggle to walk with Him again.**

**But 2000 yrs ago – a miraculously conceived adopted son of a local Galilean Carpenter begins to preach that he is God in the flesh – the promised messiah and savior - the One the world has been waiting for.**

**For 3 yrs he heals the sick, opens blind eyes, restores sight of the blind, raises the dead – and preaches the kingdom of God.**

**It’s true – he is the Son of God. Jehovah in the flesh.**

**His followers were convinced he was going to set up an earthly kingdom. But then it happened… He was condemned for blasphemy – he claimed to be God in the flesh – the Messiah.**

**Betrayed by one of his own disciples, he is arrested, dragged through 7 trials & sentenced to death.**

**His friends & followers who said they would never leave - Ran**

**How is this possible? This man, who raised the dead and healed the maimed and sick, is now mutilated and dying.**

**7 fatal blows to Jesus – Recorded in Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn (nail shames to cross)**

**1 The face – Fist and beard – concussion & nerve damage.**

**Things you have looked upon – seen – ignored – the shame**

**2-3 Back & chest – Razor sharp bones, lead balls tied to a whip**

**The people you have turned your back on, kids, family, friends**

**4 The head – A rod, crowns of thorns (in critical condition)**

**Thoughts in your head, the hatred, perversion, unforgiveness – the things inside no one sees.**

**5-6 His hands & feet - 7 inch spikes, lacerating nerves... painful!**

**Things you have done, the places your feet have taken you.**

**7 The side – fulfilled scripture- no broken bones–explain**

**Marriage failures - the one by your side, you were to protect.**

**Seven fatal blows for every area of our sinful life. Imagine the shame & regret of the twelve - What's your greatest regret? Anger, sexual sin, broken promises, lies, addiction, neglect, etc.**

**Jesus was betrayed, arrested, violently beaten, and nailed to a cross... but let's make it clear - it was not a mistake, this was the plan all along.**

**One of the most stunning statements Jesus made - John 10:17-18 - I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. (Who of you can speak of life and death this way?)**

**They could not understand it yet. Jesus was dead. BUT - We are here today because Jesus did exactly what he said he would do!**

**Early Sunday morning, five women disciples went to the tomb to finish anointing Jesus' body with oil. When they got there, the tomb was empty! Greeted by an angel, they are told, “He is risen, just as Jesus said. Now go tell the disciples!”**

**Luke 24:9 When they (the women) came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. (They doubted – impossible!) 12 Peter, however (and John), got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. (Also recorded in NT Jesus then appeared to Peter and then to two other disciples)**

**36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” (Shalom! Que Pasa!) 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence. (Ever wonder why he kept the nail scars – when everything else was restored? For our benefit.)**

* **Jesus physically rose from the dead – not just spiritually!**

**He was not a ghost - he could enjoy human relationships and eat food. This is what Christians have to look forward to!**

* **Jesus was in the same body he died in – not a different one!**

**This was not a hallucination, a dream, or mass hypnosis.**

**This is what Christians have to look forward to!**

**44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; (the Holy Spirit) but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”**

**He departs to return later. What a day – what a night! I can only imagine how it might have felt – amazing and overwhelming! But guess who was not there? Thomas. AWOL**

**Perhaps too depressed to be around people, confused - long walks - 3 years down the drain, and a lifetime of hope erased!**

**He makes his way back – only to find he missed it all!**

**John 20:24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” (You’ll never guess who was here? Sounds like a cruel joke to a broken heart) But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”**

**I want to see him with my own eyes! I want to touch him myself. Just like they did. I need proof, just like they did!**

**John 20:26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. (a whole week of wondering, waiting, festering, crying, frustrated – yet he remained close – he did not leave them) Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” (Que Pasa!) 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, 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 believed.”**

**Are you struggling with doubt today? What we can learn from Thomas.**

**1. Doubt can happen even with people who have faith in Jesus**

**Thomas had faith but was dealing with a great disappointment and tragedy.**

**Trials and tragedy can do that – even to the believer.**

**Some of the greatest Biblical heroes started with doubt – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Elijah, and Moses. Stories of stepping out in the middle of a measure of doubt and fear – that is great faith!**

**I think of the man talking to Jesus - Mark 9:23 And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” 24 Immediately, the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (I believe, but help me overcome my doubts – I'm struggling to trust that it's truly possible for me) (Faith of a mustard seed – Matt 17:20)**

**Doubt can be a persistent issue for growth in people of faith.**

**You are not weak if you have doubts. Perhaps you are like Thomas, dealing with a great trial and tragedy, doubting.**

**2. Stay close to the faithful when doubt sets in**

**John 20:26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. (Though struggling and hurting, he stayed close to other disciples)**

**They must have been talking about it all week. I can only imagine the sadness, grief, tears, frustration, and the hope he must have had. God, why not me? Where are you? Why are you waiting? But in faith, he decided - I’m not going anywhere.**

**3. Help those who are doubting Jesus**

**How does Jesus respond to his doubt? Not with anger or irritation.**

**Peace – check my hands out. It’s me. (27 - “Do not disbelieve, but believe.”)**

**We are not here to attack you or belittle you, but to help you know and understand the goodness of Jesus.**

**Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.**

**4. Doubt can lead to a greater and deeper faith in God**

**Unless I see it and touch him myself – I need evidence – this is too important.**

**His doubt led him to seek answers that led to a greater and dangerous declaration of faith! Jo 20:28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!**

**Why so dangerous – it was blasphemy punishable by death.**

**\*\*\* Jesus is Lord and God of all!**

**Jesus referred to himself as God repeatedly in a variety of ways and methods throughout the Gospels. His followers believed it, and after the resurrection, were convinced of it.**

**Are you looking for answers to believe or for excuses not to believe?**

**If doubt is pushing you to seek truth (not excuses), you will find faith.**

**Jeremiah 29:13 - You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.  (reading/praying/talking with/ mature Christians)**

**I was taught in church growing up to never doubt, suppress questions, or ignore them. Just have faith. But Jesus can handle the Q’s!**

**Honest questions of doubt - deserve honest answers: How can God exist if there is evil? Is Jesus really the only way? Why should I believe the Bible? Did he really rise from the dead?**

**Don’t just sit in your doubt – seek the truth. James 1:6-8 But the one who is constantly doubting is double-minded and unstable in all their ways.**

**It's the difference between the desperation of doubt and the defiant skeptic. Asking questions is good and healthy if they lead to pursuing the truth. Questions are welcome here!**

**What happened to Thomas?**

**The so-called Doubting Thomas led great evangelistic missions to India and China and back to India (52-72 AD). You can see monuments, churches, and even hills named after him and his work there today.**

**History records: he is told to renounce Jesus or die he said, “Never will I deny the one who died for me.” They tied him to a tree and drove a steak through his chest. Doubting Thomas, bogus – his faith was unshakable – in the risen Jesus!**

**5. Faith is still the goal for every follower of Jesus.**

**John 20:29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

**Jesus does not need to physically appear to you at the foot of your bed for you to believe - he already has. There is evidence.**

**Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**

**However, for some, even if you saw him, you still would not believe it. It happened to Jesus and those around him. The Holy Spirit ultimately ignites the word of God in you.**

**1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again (a new beginning – past is gone!) to a living hope (a new hope in this life) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (a new future – new eternity) 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (New beginning, New life, New future – can be yours)**

**How do we know our sin and shame were paid for on the cross? Because Jesus is alive! (tear off shames) The resurrection!**

**Because it’s true – Jesus deserves our entire life! He is Lord and God!**

**He is not a passive, girly, weak, emaciated, scrawny, abused, hippie. He is the savior and risen King (turn cross around!)**

**We are not asked to believe the doctrine of the resurrection. We are asked to meet this person raised from the dead…**

**God with us – Jesus.**