

Christ's Encounter with Thomas

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 20:24-31
Preached on: Sunday, October 4, 2015

It is an immense privilege that we should never forget to be able to open up the word of God and bring our lives under its scrutiny that we might better understand the character and the will of God for our lives and we have much to glean from the text that we come to this morning in our verse-by-verse examination of John's Gospel. We are in John 20 and we will be looking at verses 24-31 and here we have the historical narrative concerning Christ's encounter with a man named Thomas and we will learn more about him this morning and see some similarities in his life with ours. Let me read the passage beginning in verse 24 of John 20.

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Now, we know very little about Thomas, however we see that he was also called Didymus which means twin, so he would have had a brother or twin brother or sister and the first time we get a snapshot of his character is in John 11. You may recall the context there. Jesus' dear friend, Lazarus, has died and his sisters, Mary and Martha, summon the Lord to come and help. "Come to Bethany," they said. Well, there was enormous hostility there in Bethany which was a little suburb of Jerusalem, and that would be like going into the lion's lair, if you will, and Jesus and the apostles knew this and so did Thomas who was one of them. So in verse 24 of that text we read, "Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.'" Sounds like a happy guy to be around. From this passage and a few others that we have, we can surmise that Thomas was a bit of a pessimist. You know the type, the type of

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person that expects the worst; a person that is bleak and cynical; often depressed; a person that is very distrustful. Their attitude is typically fatalistic, gloomy, kind of hopeless. They're always troubled; worried about various things. A good character that we all know and love as little Eeyore in Winnie the Pooh. Now, Thomas knew there was danger there in Jerusalem and that's realism, that's okay, but he jumped to the automatic conclusion that they're all going to die so he had kind of a sense of, "Well, prepare for the worst. It's probably going to happen." In fact, he may have had Murphy's law written on the back of his robe, we don't know. "What can go wrong, will go wrong." You know the old saying.

We see this attitude surface again in John 14. The context there is Jesus is talking about leaving and Thomas said to him in verse 5, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" And you can sense his love for him, but he didn't know what was going on and you can kind of get a sense that he is feeling as if, "You know, you leave, we're doomed. We don't know where you're going. What's going to happen to us? I'm not sure if your resources are sufficient for us." We see this pessimism kind of fueled his melancholy spirit here in John 20, causing him to be prone to sadness kind of depression. Remember, Jesus has been taken away; he has been tortured; he has been crucified. The indwelling Spirit of God has not come upon them yet and that's not going to happen until Pentecost, so he lacks comfort because that's one of the things the Comforter does. He lacks boldness because boldness is really empowered by the Spirit. He lacks even clarity to understand some of these things, again, the Holy Spirit is our resident truth teacher. So he's filled with fear as they all are. They are in a state of mourning. They're grief stricken.

In verse 19 we read, "it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews," so it's resurrection Sunday here and they are locked in there. They are afraid. Thomas's worst nightmare has come true. He is feeling abandoned, afraid, confused and there is almost a sense that we get as we read the narrative that he's thinking, "You know, my life is over. I'm ruined. All hope is gone. I'm never going to see Jesus again." So while the disciples are sequestered behind the doors, the locked doors, in verse 19 we read that "Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you,'" but here in verse 24, we see that Thomas was not with them when Jesus came so he did not experience all of that. We don't know where he was. Having worked with literally hundreds of people like this, he was probably wandering around someplace feeling sorry for himself. He may have been in the garden of Gethsemane, but it's so easy for people like this to be ruled by their emotions rather than by their mind and how different it would have been if he had just gone to the word, opened up the word, rather than closing out the world in isolation. How different it would have been if he had prayerfully searched the Scriptures and, for

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example, gone to the psalter in Psalm 16:10 and read about how the Messiah would one day be resurrected from the dead. Or to read Isaiah 26:19 where the Lord says, "Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise, awake and sing you who dwell in dust for your dew is like the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast out the dead."

But Thomas appears to be one of these melancholy, kind of moody, dejected, heavy-hearted type of individuals. If I can use one word that you hear very often, it's the word "lugubrious." He was lugubrious. When you look that word up, you will see his picture probably, as we say. But we're all prone to this, aren't we? And such a heart is often fueled by past disappointments and debilitating feelings of abandonment and rejection and they become very distrusting of other people. There is a lot of resentment. Sometimes they're afraid to be close with other people, to be intimate. They prefer to be left alone. The fruits of the Spirit don't grow very well on that vine and the effect of this kind of heart, this kind of inner personal style of relating, can be quite debilitating. So here in John 20, we read in verse 25 that the disciples are telling him the good news. "We have seen the Lord!" But it doesn't penetrate his pessimism and his distrust so he says, "Unless I see, I will not believe." It's almost as if he's saying, "I don't even want to hear it. I don't want to hear this type of good news. Don't even go there. At some level, I feel safer and more comfortable in my misery. I don't want to have my hopes brought up high once again only to have them dashed. I am through with that." That's the sense that you get here, so with that kind of an attitude, it will leave you in a dungeon of despair.

I want to look at these verses under two very simple headings. We will look at the danger, number one, of despair. What can happen when we suddenly, perhaps unwittingly, close out the world and live in that kind of darkness and try to live by sight rather than faith. Then secondly, we're going to look at the blessings of belief. What God promises to those and what he delivers to those who live by faith and not by sight.

So let's look more closely at the text. Verse 24, again, "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came," referring to the first time that Jesus appeared to them. We're not told where he was but he missed that electrifying event so in verse 25 we read that, "the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!'" What the grammar is saying here is that this was the theme of their conversations and, naturally, wouldn't it have been? "The Lord just comes through the wall! We thought he was dead! Mary had told us and we had seen some things here, we saw the grave clothes, but all of a sudden there he is! Thomas, you're not going to believe what we saw!" So they are telling him this constantly, but he says to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." In other words, "I refuse to believe. My mind is made up."

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Well, a melancholy type of person that is prone to pessimism for whatever reason will be like that. In fact, if you're around them, you will see, for example, you take them to a place and show them a beautiful mountain vista that takes your breath away and all they can see is the dead tree about 100 yards out there. Or you take them to a magnificent, glorious, scenic river that's just incredible and all they see is the dead fish that washed up on the shore. Well, this is the world in which some people choose to live and, you know, when you live there, when things really do go bad, you end up in absolute despair and this is what we see going on with Thomas.

This type of heart condition breeds various things. Let me put them in two real simple categories. Despair, first of all, breeds unbelief. Think of it this way: it's too risky to have your hopes built up only to have them be dashed once again. That's why we read here that the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" Ah but, despair doesn't want to hear that. It's too risky. Isn't it interesting that these kind of people will not even hear the testimony of fellow believers? Sin is irrational at times, isn't it? It can even be insane, and sometimes this unbelief is a way of justifying a person's anger towards a world that's just not working for him. By the way, you see this to the extreme in some of these mass murderers, when you hear about them. The world hasn't come through the way they have demanded and so they are going to get even. But it also, this type of unbelief, makes others feel sorry for you in some sick way while at the same time it gives you power over them. Here's how that works, "I'm not as gullible as you to believe all of that. I've got to have proof." Well, dear friends, power is a fool's opiate. It deadens the pain for a while. You may think that you kind of get even with other people. It may make you feel better about yourself and give you some temporary satisfaction but in the end it only deepens your despair.

This is just one of the many ways sin can work in the heart. This is why we read in Jeremiah 17:9 that, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" And frankly, this is part of the idolatry of self, if you will, to be so committed to self-protection and self-promotion that you allow yourself to be just ruled by your own emotions. You come up with your own ways of somehow surviving in this thing called life regardless what God says, regardless of who he is and you begin to live by sight rather than by faith. You live by your feelings, not by truth, and your happiness rises and falls according to your circumstances so self ends up ruling the throne of your life rather than God.

You know, this is the nature of idolatry, to choose to worship something that we believe will give us life, even if it's silly, like the idolaters in Judah that Jeremiah speaks of in chapter 2, verse 13, where God says, "My people have committed two evils: 1. They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters." That's even what Thomas was doing here. To

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do this, 2. "To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water."
"Thank you, God, but I'll handle this. I've got my own way of coping. I've got my own way of surviving and I don't want to be confused with the facts. I don't want to hear things that cannot be proven to me. I don't want to ever again have my hopes dashed and so I will live in my safe little world that I have created."

Well, not only does despair breed unbelief but unbelief sets conditions for God. Think about that: not only does despair breed unbelief but unbelief sets conditions for God. This is what happens here with Thomas. We see pride at work here; putting God to the test; requiring him to prove himself. Notice verse 25, again he's saying that, "Unless I see these things, I will not believe. I don't care what you guys are telling me. I've made up my mind," and by implication he's saying, "I don't care what has been written in the Old Testament Scriptures that we have. I'm not even going to consider all of that stuff that Jesus talked about when I was with him for 3 ½ years where he talked about dying and rising again from the dead. The Lord himself is going to have to prove these things to me. Unless I see, I will not believe."

Many people are this way. It reminds me of the crowds that gathered around Jesus, remember, in Matthew 12? And Jesus called them "an evil and adulterous generation that seeks for a sign," but he says, "but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." In other words, a sign of judgment that will be validated by the resurrection of Christ. You see, Jesus always declined to give signs on demand. Do you realize that? Evidence were not the means by which he appealed to unbelievers as he indicated in his story of the rich man and Lazarus. Remember Lazarus the beggar? Luke 16? You will recall how the rich man was in the torment of hell, Jesus tells us, and he saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side and he begged Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool his tongue for he was in anguish in the flames. Then he begged him to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers lest they also come into that terrible place of torment and we read in the text, "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.'" And he said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." In other words, "Scripture is not enough. They've got to have more than that. They need to see somebody coming back from the dead. They know Lazarus the beggar. Send him. Then they will believe." Abraham said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."

Beloved, never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation. Scripture is the only thing that has the power to overcome unbelief. You see, unbelief is a moral, not an intellectual problem. No amount of evidences will ever turn unbelief to faith. This is what we see in Scripture. But the revealed word of God has the inherent

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power to do just that. This is why Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life," and the Spirit gives life through his word. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." In fact, James 1:18 says, "Of His will He brought us forth," how? "By the word of truth." People ask, "What's the key to successful evangelism? Where can I find some technique that I can use?" Folks, successful evangelism really depends upon prayer and the word. Pray that the Spirit of God will convict hearts and unleash the Scripture on them and watch what God will do. Hebrews 4:12, you're familiar with that great text. It says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." That's the power of the word.

Well, Thomas's pessimistic, melancholy heart brought him to despair and his despair bred that unbelief, that recalcitrant unbelief, that stubborn unbelief, and then that unbelief caused him to put God to the test. It caused him to set conditions literally for God that he might prove himself to Thomas. It's as if to say, "God, you're going to have to prove yourself to me. I will stand in judgment over you." It's a frightening thing but, you know, all along he had available to him the most powerful evidence of all and that's the word of the living God. He had heard the word of Christ. He had the Old Testament Scriptures and so forth. Just think of the time and the money and the energy people waste today to answer questions that have already been answered in Scripture.

I was thinking about this. Let me share just a couple of thoughts along this line. Billions of dollars are being spent right now to answer the question, "How can we stop the spike in violent crime in America, especially gun violence?" That's one of the big topics today. I was reading how 111 gun deaths in Chicago occurred in just two weekends recently. Police are scared to death to do their jobs. They are now the target of vicious citizens. I read that there have been 74 school shootings in the past 18 months. It's incredible, isn't it? Now another school shooting just this week in Oregon targeting Christians which, by the way, means that there will be no public outrage. If other groups had been targeted, oh boy, the world would be coming to an end, but because they are Christians, there will be no public outrage. And this school's killing happened in yet another "gun free" zone with one unarmed guard. He had some mace. You see, mass murderers know they're safe in these kinds of places. Victims are helpless. Imagine what would happen if you turned the White House into a gun free zone and you disarmed the Secret Service.

Well, the answer to all of this is and I listed the top four that I've heard on the news: gun confiscation; stricter gun laws; better screening for mental illness; and outlaw violent video games, music and movies. I mean, folks, it's absurd. It's laughably ridiculous. It's like trying to cure cancer with aroma therapy and yoga. You see, none of these things will change what's going on because none of them address the source of the problem. The

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source of the problem is the depraved condition of the human heart. Jesus said, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders," and so on. You see, man is a sinner by nature. He is consumed with one thing and that is satisfying his own flesh and he will go to great lengths to do that. He is at war with God and only faith in Christ can transform that heart and make him a new creature in Christ so that the old things will pass away and the new things will come so that he will have a whole new disposition, a whole new outlook, a whole new world view. You see, the only answer, if I can put it this way, is biblical Christianity. The very thing that everybody hates these days. God has revealed all of this to us in his word. Do you want to know how to deal with all of this stuff? Open up the Bible. It will tell you. It is the word of God.

Let me give you another example. Billions are being spent on trying to find out if there is life on Mars. Billions and billions of dollars and God has already answered that in his word. The answer is an emphatic no. What we see in Scripture is apart from his angelic host. All of his creation has been placed upon the earth to give him glory and we know that the earth is a disposable planet. Sorry environmentalists, but it is a disposable planet that is one day going to be absolutely destroyed during the time of the tribulation in ways that we can't even begin to fathom and then it's going to be renovated, returned to Edenic splendor during our Lord's millennial reign, and then it's going to be uncreated and recreated. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. So if you want to know the answer about life and the earth and all of this stuff, global warming and all of these things, go to Scripture.

One other example. Today our government leaders are in a panic wondering what Russia is up to in Syria. I think, folks, read Ezekiel 38 and 39. There is your answer. There we are told that Russia, with all the pagan nations of the earth that follow their father the devil, by the way, all of the nations of the earth that hate God, that follow Satan and serve him even unwittingly, are committed to the extermination of God's covenant people, Israel, whom God has promised to one day restore. We've seen this down through history and in Ezekiel 38 and 39, we see how that God has promised to allow a confederacy of nations to form and he is going to put hooks in their jaws and bring them down upon the northern mountains of Israel so that he can destroy them and you see the details of that in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Folks, it's incredible to see all of this coming together.

My point is: we have the word of God but we underestimate its authority; it's inspiration; it's infallibility; it's sufficiency. This is what Thomas did. But the most important question of all is: what can a man do to be saved and to have eternal life? Well, the word of God tells us that, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." But, you see, the heart is such a stubborn thing. It doesn't want to be confused with the facts. It believes

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what it wants to believe. It suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, Paul tells us, so it wants proof. We assume that somehow we have the ability to judge rightly and if we just see enough evidence, then we will believe but, folks, seldom is that the case because fundamentally unbelief is a deliberate refusal to believe despite the evidence.

Think about it: Thomas had more than enough evidence to believe that Christ had risen again. He had spent 3 ½ years with the Son of God. He had seen his power. He saw countless miracles. He heard him speak. He saw his life. He heard him repeatedly talk about how he was going to die and rise again the third day. And yet he refused to believe and now he's got the testimony of his brothers and sisters. You see, the issue was his heart, not his mind, and like so many people today, he was believing what he wanted to believe because it was safer to believe that. He had already made up his mind.

So notice what happens here. This is fascinating. Verse 26, it's the Lord's day again, by the way. It was a week later; it's Sunday; one week after the resurrection. Thomas now is going to show up with the others who are, once again, hiding behind locked doors. Verse 26, "After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut," or it could be translated locked, "and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.'" Again, can you imagine this? You're in the room wondering what's going on. "We saw the Lord last week!" and all of this and all of a sudden there he is. Astounding. How gracious of the Lord. How compassionate. How kind of him. Once again, he bestows upon them the wonderful blessings of peace. As you will recall from last week, this not only includes the objective peace that comes from our justification that we have now been declared righteous because of the righteousness of Christ, therefore the war with God is over. We can come into his presence because we are hid in Christ and he no longer sees our sin but the righteousness of his beloved Son, but it's also the subjective peace that we experience deep within our souls. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding which will guard your heart and your mind, Paul says, in Christ Jesus. What a welcomed relief, once again, for these frightened men. These men whose consciences were no doubt tormented because of the way they had abandoned the Lord.

I love this in verse 27, John, being an eye-witness says this, "Then he said to Thomas." Now, we've got to stop there. I mean, you've just got to see what's not written here and, again, this is at some level, I'll admit it, it's conjecture but, I mean, you've got these guys in the room. They are locked in there and they're afraid and all of a sudden Jesus shows up again and I'm sure if you would look at Thomas, he would have that look like we say here in Tennessee, "He looks like a mule staring at a new gate." It's like he's speechless. Jesus shows up. He says, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, this means that all of a sudden the Lord looked to Thomas. I mean, can you imagine having the risen

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Christ show up and look at you and you're knowing that you have said all of these things about, "I don't believe it. I'm not going to believe it. I don't want to hear it." And all of a sudden Jesus said to Thomas. I mean, talk about being exposed. "He knows all about me."

And the Lord is so full of mercy, isn't he? He says, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Now folks, it doesn't say this but I seriously doubt if Thomas inspected his hand and his side. I doubt if his eyes ever left the face of his beloved Lord. He was so overwhelmed to see him. Just the sound of his voice, just to be in the presence of the living Christ would soften his heart, but you must understand that Thomas's problem was not so much his inability to be convinced by him but his unwillingness to be committed to him. Therein is the great distinction. Genuine saving faith is no different. Genuine saving faith requires that we believe in a person, not merely a concept or a set of facts that we have been able to research and make sure that we've got all of our empirical ducks in a row and, "Yeah, okay. Alright, yeah, I'll believe that." Oh, it's so much more than that.

Let me give you an example. I remember about six years ago and some of you may remember this, my dear wife, Nancy, was losing sight in her left eye. Her endocrine system was being affected in various ways and the doctors discovered that she had a cyst on her pituitary gland; a little pea sized gland right in the middle of your brain. It had a little cyst on it that was impinging upon the optic nerve and fortunately they found that or she would have gone blind. But I'll never forget going into the office with the neurosurgeon to hear the results of the MRI, to get the accurate diagnosis, to have him explain the kind of craniotomy, all of the things that he would have to do to go under the hemisphere and go in there and rather than going through the nose. He went through all of these things, such a dear man. He gave us all of the risks. I remember him telling me that, "She may never know you again. We don't know. But this is what we think will happen." He gave us the prognosis and it was obvious that this man knew anatomy and physiology and neurosurgery in ways that we could never even begin to know and you know how doctors to you, they talk to you as laymen. If they were to talk to you in the way that they're really thinking, you wouldn't understand anything they were saying. But I remember I just had to ask him, I said, "Doctor, I hope you're not offended with this but I've just got to ask, how many times have you performed this surgery?" He smiled at me and he said, "Hundreds." Then he said, "I know what I'm doing, but I don't blame you for asking that question. If it was my wife, I'd be asking the same one." But then I'll never forget what he told me and this I really feel was of the Spirit. He said, "Dave and Nancy, at some level, you must simply trust me." And at some level, that's what we had to do and

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we had to trust the Lord. The same is true with saving faith. By the way, as you know, a wonderful outcome. God was so gracious.

But it's the same thing with saving faith, isn't it? After examining all of the facts of the New Testament, after hearing all of the testimonies of the transforming power of the Gospel, we still must come to that point in our life where we commit the very whole of our being, not to a set of facts that we have figured out, but to a person. Said differently: saving faith is not so much being convinced of a set of propositions, it's being committed to a person, the person of the Lord Jesus and this is what we see here. "

The Lord is so gracious to reveal himself to this cynical, skeptical disciple who is overwhelmed when he realized he was in the presence of Jesus. Notice his great confession here in verse 28, "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" I hope that's the confession of your heart because he alone is God and therefore as the Scripture says, he alone is able to save unto the uttermost all who will come unto him. "My Lord and my God!" Friends, if that is the confession of your lips and it is sincere, it will also be the confession of your life.

Well, finally we see not only the danger of despair but, secondly, the blessings of belief, what God promises to all who live by faith and not by sight. Notice verse 29, "Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed?'" This was really a confirmation of Thomas's faith and it prepares the way for the beatitude that follows. He said, "Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." You see, "blessed" here means more than "happy," and certainly we are happy but it speaks of the reality of being accepted by God. It speaks of the reality that all that God has promised his redeemed will, in fact, come to pass. Even though we have not seen him, we believe in him by faith and Peter said this so eloquently in 1 Peter 1:8, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

You see, beloved, today we rest upon the word of God and the testimony of the disciples. This is the way of faith. Again, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. And Paul says in Romans 5:5, "Therefore we have a hope that does not disappoint." Then he adds this and this is so precious to me, "We have a hope that does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." In other words, it's the Holy Spirit that produces within us, not only belief when we are born again, but also a conscious awareness of our salvation. The assurance of our salvation. The conscious awareness of the love of God. He says, "It's been poured out within our hearts." The original language means that it just gushes forth. There is an abundant, lavish, extravagant torrent. There is a flood. An outpouring of the

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love of God within our hearts because God is not stingy with what he wants us to experience deep within our souls. He gives us a superabundant feeling of his love for us.

Now, folks, this doesn't come from signs and wonders and dreams and visions and all of these things that people crave for. It's a result of his word and his indwelling Spirit. In fact, Peter tells us that Scripture is far more reliable than even the genuine firsthand experiences of the apostles. He tells us this in 2 Peter 1:19. In the context there he is describing these incredible things that they saw but then he says, "But we have the prophetic word," literally meaning the Old Testament written by the prophets. That's what they had. "We have the prophetic word made more sure to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp in a dark place." In other words, folks, now I want you to catch this: Scripture trumps experience. Don't use experience to validate truth claims like a lot of people do. "God told me this. I saw that. I felt this," etc. Go to the word of God. It is the more complete and permanent and authoritative source of truth. Far more than man's experience. As we look at Scripture, we see that it is a more reliable verification of the teachings about the person, the atonement, the second coming of Christ; even moreso than the genuine firsthand experiences of the apostles themselves.

It is for this reason in verse 30, John goes on to say, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples." It's interesting that he doesn't list them. Many more, "which are not written in this book." By the way, this would have included many miracles that he would have done in those 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension. But notice what he says, "but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Oh, what a tender, what a loving Savior to once again reveal himself to this needy man, Thomas. Causing this most unyielding skeptic to bequeath to us this most profound confession, "My Lord and My God!"

Now, you might ask, "Whatever happened to Thomas?" Well, history well documents that fact that Thomas ministered in the land of India and he was buried on a small hill near the airport in Madras, India, and it is said that he eventually did die for the Master as he was afraid they were going to all do. In fact, it is said that he was impaled by a spear for his faith. One writer put it this way, "A fitting form of martyrdom for one whose faith came of age when he saw the spear mark in his Master's side and for one who longed to be reunited with his Lord."

Well, dear friends, if you struggle in similar ways as Thomas, the Lord will reveal himself to you as well. Do you want to know how? In sincerity of heart, fall on your face before the Lord your God and plead with him to reveal himself to you through his word and he will do that. Through his word, you will see those nail pierced hands. You will see

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Christ's Encounter with Thomas

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 20:24-31
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the wound in his side. You will see him face-to-face. You will hear his voice speak to you as you meditate upon his word. What a wonderful Savior we have.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for the truths that just flow out of this text, truths that speak to each of us because we can all see ourselves in various ways here as we look at Thomas. And Lord, I pray that this will be a challenge to each of us to live as you have told us to live in the Old Testament in Proverbs. You have said that we are to receive your words. We are to treasure your commandments within us. We are to make our ears attentive to wisdom. You've told us to incline our hearts to understanding. And then if we cry for discernment, if we lift our voice for understanding, if we seek her as silver and search for her as hidden treasures, then we will be able to discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. We thank you for that great promise. May we live consistently with these truths. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.