

A Little Thomas

[John 20:19-31](#), [Psalm 150](#)

I wonder how many of us have had someone tell us a pretty amazing story. Fish stories come to mind – particularly about the one that got away. Suddenly something goes from the size of a minnow to the size of a whale! Naturally, we are skeptical. Our first question of course is, “Where’s your proof?” Doubting someone’s claims, particularly of the far-fetched or literally impossible, is a normal, healthy response.

How often have we asked God for a sign to let us know we are going in the right direction, or doing what God would have us do, or even just give us a hint? We do this all the time. We want proof as thinking, intelligent human beings. We want to believe God with our hearts and our minds.

Given the fact that we too have questions, isn’t it reasonable to assume that there is a little Thomas in all of us? I

hope so. You may think that's an odd thing to say, but I do not find doubt as unhealthy or wrong. When we voice our questions and concerns, we are being honest with ourselves and with God. We need reassurance and guidance and hope. We need to know that when we take that next faithful step we aren't going to fall flat on our faces, curse God and turn away. We need to feel cared for by the God of wonders and miracles.

I think because it is so natural and normal for us to doubt, maybe this is why Thomas has gotten such a bad reputation over the years. We even refer to him as 'doubting Thomas' ignoring his faithfulness to Jesus during his entire ministry. When Peter tried to keep Jesus from returning to Jerusalem because he was afraid Jesus would be killed, it was Thomas that said, 'let us go that we may die with him.' Without a doubt in his mind, Thomas was ready to die for what he believed in.

I am thinking Thomas was really concerned for his fellow disciples and the followers who had claimed to have seen Jesus alive. Surely they must be suffering from hallucinations or stress-induced visions or something. He was the only realist in the group – he wanted the tangible like we often do. Woody Allen, the well-known comedian, put it this way, he would believe in God if God would send him a sign – such as making a large deposit in a Bank Account under the name, “Woody Allen.” It is easy for us to want to put everything in human terms – show me the money!

Thomas may very well have just been showing concern for his friends, yet I believe he was also showing doubt that we all face when dealing with God. Everything is not always tangible. $1+1$ does not always equal 2. At times things happen that are beyond our understanding. Jesus’ resurrection is one of those

things. I'm guessing that we too have a hard time believing that one, in spite of the evidence presented by countless witnesses, including Thomas. It wasn't humanly possible for someone to rise from the dead after being in a tomb for three days. It wasn't humanly possible for someone to bear the severe torture inflicted on him and survive. It wasn't humanly possible to have the Romans, who were experts in human torture and suffering, be wrong about Jesus' death. But we are not talking about a mere human – we are talking about the son of God. We are talking about the one who experienced human life and suffering yet maintained the divine element of God as part of his very being. We cannot explain Jesus in human terms – it is just not possible. But our hearts tell us to believe. Our minds are able to leap beyond what should be a human impossibility to a divine reality – Jesus the Christ has risen from the dead.

Jesus understands our doubts and our fears. If we didn't have a healthy measure of doubt, we would buy in to every get-rich scheme and believe every headline of the *National Inquirer*. God gave us the gift of intelligence. We do not have to park our minds at the door in order to believe in what is humanly impossible. Can we believe that we are God's chosen ones, even when we question what is going on in our lives, and maybe at times wonder where God is in a given situation. Can we cling to a shred of faith when all seems lost?

Thomas did. We do not know why Thomas was not with the others when Jesus appeared the first time. But because he wasn't there, he not only maintained the burden of the death of Jesus but the possible loss of his friends. How could they say such things to him? He saw Jesus die with his own eyes. He knew where the body was laid – even if the tomb was now

empty, isn't it possible his friends succumbed to stress, imagined seeing Jesus because they so badly wanted to see him, simply because someone had moved his body? Thomas still cared for his friends, and they still cared for him even when they did not agree. Wherever Thomas was in his faith, something must have kept him with the others.

He was with them a week later when his life was changed forever. Jesus did indeed appear again just as he had the first time. The small group was together, huddled behind closed doors when Jesus suddenly appeared to them with the same words, "Peace be with you." Jesus always seems to know the right thing to say, doesn't he? The turmoil of the Roman occupation didn't go away – the disciples were still in danger for their lives. Jesus had made enough waves with the Romans to have him killed. To be a follower of Jesus was indeed a death

sentence. Yet Jesus appeared, once again in the flesh, conquering the impossible and bringing a message of peace to a hurting world.

It is interesting that Jesus singled out Thomas by repeating the same ritual he had done with the others. He told Thomas to feel his hands and his side, even though by this time Thomas did not need the reassurance. The others received the same care – ‘touch my hands and place your hand in my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas could not have expressed a more perfect response – ‘my Lord and my God.’ From that point on Thomas continued to be the dedicated follower of Christ he had always been. Thomas received his reassurance of faith – ‘my Lord and my God.’

Are we in need of reassurance today? It is not a new phenomenon. Gideon went on to conquer a great army with

only three hundred men, yet he tested God twice before he believed God was calling him. Elijah had to hear God's voice in the calm after a storm before he returned to do what God called him to do. Abraham literally negotiated with God before he would put his faith to the test. The Bible is full of stories of people who were called by God and immediately put the questions, challenges, and dare I say it doubts, out on the table before moving forward in the steps of the Almighty. God will provide you with the reassurance you need in order to follow the path that God is calling you to. Each of us is called – none are left out. We are part of the family of God, charged to love and care for one another while clinging to the hand of the crucified Christ. God will provide you with the reassurance, comfort and strength you need to say beyond a shadow of a doubt, 'my Lord and my God. Amen.