

2021-04-14 ... Midweek Reflection ... Revd Sam Johnson
John 20

I think if I had to pick an Apostle to identify with I'd love to think I could be Peter – the rock ...or James – one of the sons of thunder! Or even, John the other one – and founder of the early church.

But I think most days I identify with Thomas.

Thomas, who was determined, loyal and was willing to “die with” Jesus when they thought he might get stoned, **in John 11**.

Thomas who asked the key question – **“Jesus, we don't even know where you're going, how could we know where heaven is?”** **In John 14**

Thomas who doubted ...Thomas who didn't believe what had happened until he saw it for himself.

Thomas who was then forever branded “doubter” ... A doubting Thomas.

I think sometimes I identify with Thomas because I doubt ... Do you? If you say no – I doubt it...

Thomas has had a difficult week – He'd missed out on seeing the resurrected Jesus! I wonder where Thomas had been that first night? Maybe he too was afraid like the other disciples, and had been locked up in a room somewhere – maybe he had been too afraid to venture out!

Whatever the reason he wasn't there...

So when Jesus had appeared to the others he didn't believe them because he'd seen him die, he'd seen him buried ... **“Unless I see the nail marks, and put my hand in his side I won't believe you”**

He wants proof – he wants to know – perhaps he really wants it to be true, but needs to convince himself!

He must have spent the week grappling with loss, grief, disbelief – and perhaps some degree of feeling conflicted, confused – what had happened?

He soon got the chance to find out - a week later there they were again, in the room, and Jesus appeared to them - Thomas too! I bet he felt a bit embarrassed, especially when Jesus asked him to give him a good poke and prod to prove he was really there ...

We don't know if Thomas ever did feel the marks on Jesus' hands and side - I don't think he needed to. He recognised who Jesus was – **“my Lord and my God”** he cries out!

Then Jesus replies:

“Because you have seen me, you have believed - blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

That must have been hard hitting. Mike Drop - cut to black!

I don't think, however, this means Thomas was cut off - we hear nothing more from him. He is mentioned as one of the ones fishing **in John 21** - one who meets the risen Jesus on the shore.

Thomas still remained one of the disciples - and is often said to have gone on to be a missionary, and tradition says was martyred. He held onto his faith - he'd still been willing to "Die with Jesus".

I doubt ...

I doubt and even sometimes just wish God would show up and show me!

PTO

Do you ever wish that?

And then he does - he does something incredible, he heals someone, he answers a prayer, he gives dreams, he helps with the problem - he brings someone into your life to help - he shows you something beautiful to remind you he's still there ...

And then, do you wish you'd had more faith? ***“Because you have seen me, you have believed - blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”***

But don't worry - all is not lost - no need to fear or feel guilty ... Jesus takes away the fear, he takes away the guilt, the feeling of wrong. He shows up on the **"shore of the sea"** and still includes us!

Thomas is a great disciple - a fantastic example of loyalty, determination - and of course doubts which in the end show his humanity! He is only human just like the rest of us - full of doubt, full of questions, full of fear, full of wrong ...

And yet Jesus, in his great love, still took upon him Thomas' and yours and my wrong and muck and sin, and died for us to set us free from wrong, sin, muck - and his resurrection sets us free to live, still full of questions, and still full of doubt ... and yet be used in building his great kingdom here and now! **Right where we are - whatever we are doing** ... even on a fishing boat in the middle of the sea!

Amen.