

# Second Sunday of Easter

**I'M A BELIEVER**

**John 20:19-31**

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**Analysis by Paige G. Evers**

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 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." 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may

come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Status Quo**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Skeptical***

Thomas had clear standards for proof that the crucified Jesus was alive. The testimony of his fellow disciples, "We have seen the Lord" (v. 25) was not enough. Thomas had to see and touch Jesus' wounds for himself. Without that, Thomas declared, "I will not believe." Today, few people who question Jesus' resurrection are that honest. Instead of echoing Thomas's "I will not believe," they are more likely to couch their unbelief in phrases such as, "I'm just not that interested in God," or "I'm doing fine without thinking about Jesus," or "going to church just doesn't do much for me." Those are all other ways of stating, like Thomas did, "Unless there is overwhelming proof presented specifically to me, I will not believe."

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Sticking with What You Know***

In Thomas's case, his initial refusal to believe shows that his heart trusted the certainty of death more than the promise of resurrection. Death was a known quantity. For someone who hung on a cross, death was the status quo. It would take far more than the words of the other disciples for Thomas's heart to believe that the death of Jesus was any different.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Left Where You Are***

When death becomes your lord, as it did for Thomas in the first part of this pericope, you miss out on life. God will leave you to what your heart fears, loves, and trusts most, even if it will lead to your destruction. Thomas was "not with them when Jesus came" (v. 24) through the locked door the first time. The

natural trajectory of his refusal to believe would leave him locked out of any future, other than judgment and death.

## **PROGNOSIS: Life in Jesus' Name**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Saved from Death***

That natural trajectory of the death of the sinner is interrupted as God raises Jesus from the grave. The risen Jesus appears to the disciples and to Thomas. He tells Thomas: "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side" (v. 27). Jesus does what is necessary to give Thomas the gift of faith. But seeing Jesus' wounds does not change Thomas's eternal future. The wounds are only marks of Jesus' crucifixion. The cross is what saves Thomas from the power of sin and death.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Receiving What Christ Gives***

Now Thomas's heart has a new Lord, the One who is risen, to believe in and to trust. In reply to Jesus urging him, "Do not doubt but believe" (v. 27), Thomas confesses, "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28). No longer asking for proof, he receives the gift of a risen Lord. He believes "that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (v. 31).

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Sent to Share What You Believe***

After his encounter with the risen Jesus, Thomas joins the other disciples as one to whom Jesus has given the Holy Spirit (v. 22). Jesus has sent them out to forgive sins (vv. 21, 23) and to continue his ministry. Thomas is also with the other disciples when the risen Jesus meets them on the beach (John 21:2) and when the disciples choose a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:13) after the Ascension. From the moment Jesus appears to them in the locked room, saying "Peace be with you" (v. 19) he sends Thomas and his fellow disciples to invite others to "come to

believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God” and through believing to “have life in his name” (v. 31).