
I am happy to be here with you tonight

Cathy and I normally attend the Friendship Dinners with three students;

- Guan Chen
 - Jingnan Zhang
 - Dongming Yang
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But none of them are here today.

- Guan and Jingnan went back to China for the summer
 - Dongming is in Boston this week visiting her great Uncle.
 - So we are “student-less”.
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Today my speech is on the subject of “Doubting and Faith”

Although my friends call me ‘Tom’ or ‘Tommy’

- My birth name is “Thomas”
 - And I am a Christian.
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I didn’t become a Christian until I was in my second year of college.

- It was watching my own parent’s lives change when they became Christians that caused me to consider becoming a Christian.
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One of my obstacles to becoming a Christian was unbelief, or “doubting”.

- I thought that before I became a Christian
 - I had to have all of my questions answered and all of my doubt removed.
 - I was told that I was a “Doubting Thomas” because I didn’t believe.
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“Doubting Thomas”

- Is a term that is used to describe someone who will refuse to believe something without direct, physical, personal evidence; a skeptic.
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The term is based on the Biblical account of Thomas the Apostle

- You can read about the story in John 20:24-29 in the Bible
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Thomas was one of the 12 disciples of Jesus in the Bible

- He was given the nickname "Doubting Thomas."
 - Because he simply did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead
 - And demanded proof before believing

I want to point out that Thomas DID have some very good qualities.

- One time the other disciples tried to stop Jesus from going to Bethany
 - They were afraid of the danger from those in the area
 - Who had tried to kill Jesus
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- Thomas said to them, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him"
 - He displayed great courage and loyalty to Jesus.
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Not all of Thomas's doubting was unfounded

- Some of his doubt was based upon facts
 - Some of his doubt was based upon his emotions
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Thomas had very emotional week when Jesus was crucified

On Thursday:

- Thomas sees Jesus arrested by an angry crowd
 - Thomas flees for his life and runs away from his Master.
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On Good Friday:

- Thomas watches at a distance as they nail his friend Jesus to a cross
 - As Jesus' life drains away on the cross, so does Thomas's hope.
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On Saturday

- Thomas is in shock:
 - His friend Jesus is dead and is buried in a tomb.
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On Sunday

- Thomas doesn't gather with his fellow disciples for an evening meal.
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On Monday

- The disciples go looking for Thomas and tell him what has happened
 - "Thomas, we were in that upper room where we'd been meeting.
 - We locked the doors for protection. Yet, all of a sudden, Jesus appears. 'Peace, Shalom,' He says. Then He shows us His hands.
 - There are jagged holes where the nails had been. He pulled back his tunic and shows us where the spear penetrated His chest.
 - But he isn't weak or sick or dying. He is alive, raised from the dead!"

Thomas responded

- "I don't believe it," barks Thomas. "I don't believe a word of it.
 - You're seeing what you want to see.
 - **Jesus is dead!** --- I saw Him die
 - He's dead, and the sooner you accept that fact, the better off you'll be.
-

Peter pleads with him.

"Thomas, I saw Him myself, I tell you, and He was as real as you are!"

Thomas expresses his doubts:

- "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands
 - And put my hand into His side,
 - I will not believe it."
-

On The Follow Sunday

- Thomas is eating with his fellow disciples in the same locked room.
 - Jesus stands among them once again and says: "Shalom, peace be with you."
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Jesus turns to him and speaks plainly to Thomas:

"Put your finger here, see my hands."

- Jesus holds out His scarred hands for Thomas to examine.
-

Jesus begins to open his outer garment and says,

- "Reach out your hand and put it into my side.
 - Stop doubting and believe."
-

Thomas is weeping now and then begins to sob out loud.

- Jesus reaches out and puts a hand on his shoulder.
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Then Thomas slips to his knees and says: "*My Lord and my God!*"

- Thomas is the first disciple to put into words the truth that:
 - Jesus is both Lord *and* God.
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Jesus replies,

- "Because you have seen me, you have believed.
 - Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
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Jesus was saying that believing isn't always based upon seeing proof

- Sometimes it is based upon simply faith and believing God without proof

Even as a Christian I have times of acting like a “Doubting Thomas”

- Times when I have questions and doubts
 - Times when I don’t understand God
 - Times when I simply need to walk in faith
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Jesus has made me very much aware that He does exist.

- No, He didn't appear to me and show me His hands and His side
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But He has showed Himself to me in many other ways.

- And helped me to simply believe Him by faith
 - Through answered prayers
 - Through times when I read the Bible
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And Jesus continues to be there taking me deeper in faith in Him.

- Even in the times where my faith is the weakest
 - I still turn to Him with what little I have.
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And the experiences make me a better person

- And made my faith so much stronger.
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The Bible tells us that that:

“³ Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once” (1 Corinthians 15:3-6)

It takes faith to believe this passage, not academic knowledge

Becoming a Christian is not an academic thing;

- **It is a moral decision.**
 - You don’t have to have iron clad faith before you are “ready to believe”.
 - Wondering how religion and science could agree.
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You simply need to step out and apply faith to what you already know.

Faith is an act of obedience, walking in a way pleasing to God.

- It doesn’t matter how much we probe, and ponder, and question;
- Eventually we simply step out using what we know
- That is faith

The formula is this: DOUBTING + FAITH = BELIEF

That is true for spiritual things as well as

- Medical
 - Scientific
 - Engineering
 - Chemists
 - And yes, even marriage.
-

You take what you know and put it to the test

- That is faith
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Eventually, after all the study and pondering and calculations are done:

- An engineer has to build the bridge
 - and THEN send the car across

 - A medical doctor has to pick up the scalpel
 - and THEN make the incision

 - A chemist has to mix the two chemicals together
 - and watch what happens

 - Two people can study and study about marriage,
 - but eventually walk it out
-

I love the story about “Doubting Thomas”

- Here is a man who had been with Jesus for over 3 years
 - As a student and disciple of Jesus
 - He saw with his own eyes Jesus performing miracles
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Jesus told Thomas that he would die and then be raised from the dead

- Multiple times!
 - And still Thomas had doubts that Jesus was raised from the dead
 - He was a man who is just like us!
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Thomas expressed his unwillingness to just accept other people’s word

- That Jesus was truly raised from the dead.
- Thomas asked God for proof that Jesus was raised from the dead.
- And he was given the proof.

The Bible tells us that the early church had a whole group like Thomas:

“Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”
(Acts 17:11 NIV)

In other words it is OK to still have questions and be a “Christian”

- That is “a follower of Christ
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It’s OK if we still have some doubts from time to time

- And study to find out answers
 - And ask questions to find answers
 - And read the Bible to find answers
 - And pray to find answers
-

How does God respond when we doubt Him?

- Jesus said, “You’ve seen Me you seen the Father” John 14:19
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In other words

- We can look at how Jesus responded to Thomas’s doubting
 - And then understand how God responds when we doubt Him
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You too can come to God with your doubts and your questions

- And ask Him to show you the proof.
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God is not going to push us away

- God wants you to know and believe Him
 - And He will help you to do it
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LET’S PRAY