

Theme: “But These Are Written...”

Text: John 20:19-31 (EHV)

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together behind locked doors because of their fear of the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! Just as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you.” ²² After saying this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ Whenever you forgive people’s sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” ²⁴ But Thomas, one of the Twelve, the one called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.” ²⁶ After eight days, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Take your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue to doubt, but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” ³⁰ Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This section of the Gospel of John is the traditional Gospel reading for the Sunday after Easter. It is one of my favorite texts to preach on in the whole Bible. It’s such a compelling narrative. It’s so relatable and memorable. Which one of us hasn’t been like Thomas before? Which of us hasn’t had doubts about our faith at times—even if it was just for a short time? Which of us hasn’t wanted more visible proof at times from the Lord to confirm our faith and take away our doubts?

Maybe this is one of your favorite accounts in the Bible as well. Maybe you’ve heard or read it many times over the years. In my 20 years in the ministry I would guess I’ve preached on this text at least ten times. That’s a lot! So, there’s a particular challenge when preaching on a familiar text, especially one that you’ve preached on a number of times. As I was studying it again this week and thinking about what I was going to say for this Sunday’s sermon that hasn’t been said many times before about this text, it struck me that one of the most important aspects of this text is not just the narrative about Thomas and Jesus’ appearance to him—that’s the “what.” What’s also very important is the “why.” Why did the Holy Spirit inspire John to write down this account in the Bible?

We find the answer to that question in the last verses of this text. Those are the verses we are going to focus on today. When we read these verses we realize that these words were written for us. Let’s start with Jesus’ words in v. 29 of our text. Yes, Jesus is speaking to Thomas here, but don’t miss the fact that He is also speaking to us and to all believers, who, unlike Thomas, would not be able to see Jesus with their own eyes: **Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (v. 29).**

What does Jesus call us and all who believe in Him even though we’ve never seen Him with our own two eyes? Foolish? Gullible? Childish? Insane? No! He call us “**Blessed!**” When we look to Jesus with eyes of faith we truly are **blessed!** In fact, John tells us this is one of the reasons God’s Holy Spirit inspired him to write what He wrote in his Gospel. Listen again to v. 30 and the first half of v. 31, “**Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book.**” ³¹ **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 30-31a).**

“These are written that you may believe.” Even though we haven’t seen Jesus with our own two eyes He has not left us without proof. He’s given us His own words which He inspired eyewitnesses like the Apostle John to write down for us. And even though He hasn’t written down for us everything He ever said or did, what He has written down for us is enough for us to **“believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 31)**. In fact, we could truly say that these words of v. 31 are not just the reason John’s Gospel was written, but rather they are the reason and purpose for the entire Bible: **“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 31)**.

As Jesus says, we are truly **blessed** when we believe in Him. What were Jesus’ first words to His disciples in our text? **“Peace be with you!” (v. 19)**. We are **blessed** because in Jesus we have **peace**, true peace. What did He show them that proved, not only that He was alive, but that He had bought and paid for their peace? The very next verse tells us, **“After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord” (v. 20)**.

When everything seems uncertain, we can look to the risen and living Lord. In those nail-pierced hands and His spear-pierced side we see the price He paid for our peace. In a world filled with war; in a life filled with stress and problems, sorrows, and guilt over our past and present sins, we can still be sure of **peace in Jesus!** He died and paid for all sins, and now He lives! He says to us, **“Peace be with you!” (v. 19)**. In Jesus it’s more than a wish or a common greeting; it is an accomplished fact, a precious gift from our Lord and Savior.

Finally, we are truly **blessed** when we believe in Jesus because as John says in the last words of our text, **“and that by believing you may have life in his name” (v. 31b)**. What kind of **life** did Jesus come to give us? Certainly He gives us blessings in this life beyond what we deserve or could even ask for—especially the spiritual blessings of forgiveness of sins and faith in Him which brings us that priceless gift of peace to our hearts and souls. But more than that Jesus gives us eternal life **“in His name.”** Those nail-pierced hands and His spear-pierced side bought and paid for our place in heaven with Him forever. A place that He promises He is preparing for us (see **John 14:2-3**)!

Jesus has come to each one of us once again today in His own familiar Words to remove our doubts. He says to each one of us, **“Put your finger here and look at my hands. Take your hand and put it into my side.” (v. 27a)**. See and touch the wounds I bore on the cross for your sins. See and touch that I am your living, loving Savior! **“Do not continue to doubt, but believe.” (v. 27b)**. Jesus is speaking to you and me as well when He says, **“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (v. 29)**. Jesus has also given us the sure and certain words of His eyewitnesses, like John, who reminds us that this was the very reason he wrote the words he did: **“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (v. 31)**.

With “eyes” of faith in Jesus’ Words we confidently say today with the disciples, **“We have seen the Lord!” (v. 25)**. Believe and there will come a day when we will truly see—not with “eyes” of faith—but as the Apostle John also reminds us, **“we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2)**! What a day that will be! We look forward to that day, and we can say, like Job of the Old Testament, **“For I know that my Redeemer lives... Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25,27)**. Amen.