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Apr

## Unless I See

Stories That Matter

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR A

Thomas reminds us that the power of Resurrection is inseparable from its reality. This service invites worshipers to engage all their senses—sight, sound, touch, taste—to notice Christ’s risen presence among us and within us.

### REFERENCES

Exodus 15:1-18

Psalm 111

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

### COLORS

White

Good old Thomas. We’re sure glad he is there. He saves us from having to ask these uncomfortable questions. We don’t have to carry the weight of our doubts all alone. He paved the way for us. He stood there in front of the remaining disciples, who were still glowing from their encounter with the Risen Jesus, and said, “No.” He said, “I’m not buying it. I don’t get it. I can’t see what you see.” And in so doing, he legitimized all those questions that race through our minds from time to time.

I was about to graduate from high school - many years ago - and was in a leadership position in our church youth group. One Sunday night after playing some games, we were sitting in a dark corner of that old church just talking. One of the younger teens managed to say something like, “I’m not even sure there is a God, you know?” “Yeah,” another piped up, “It is kinda out there.” And before you know it, there was a general consensus that this God thing was pretty incredible and not particularly necessary for a good life, as far as they could see anyway.

Needless to say, I was stunned. Remember, I was just a kid myself. What are you in high school—six or seven? That’s what it felt like now when I look back on it. I was shaking, not sure how to deal with that, startled by the lack of certainty, lack of belief. I pretty much ran away from the moment.

Remember. I was young and somewhat sheltered from the world. I hadn’t yet had my heart broken so completely that I wondered where God was. I hadn’t stood by helplessly while someone I loved suffered through the end of life. I hadn’t paid enough attention to the world around me to see cruelty and inhumanity on a worldwide scale, death and devastation, suffering and isolation.

I hadn’t yet realized that Thomas’s position was the sensible one. It is the world’s question. Unless I see, unless I touch, I won’t believe. Doesn’t that make so much more sense? Isn’t that what we are taught in our academic endeavors, to verify? Aren’t we asked to substantiate our beliefs? Why do we give Thomas such a hard time, when he is the one who makes the most sense, seems the most like us?

Did you notice Thomas’s name in Bible stories? We call him “Doubting Thomas,” but that title never appears in the text anywhere. In the Bible, he is called Thomas the Twin. Isn’t that interesting? And we know nothing at all about his twin—such a major character, and we know nothing about this twin. It could be anybody. It could even be you.

Or me. We stand with Thomas more often than we would like to admit. We are his twin in our need of confirmation, of something to touch and hold on to. We need a connection to what we believe. That’s what we need and want, even when we can’t articulate it. The real tragedy in this story is in verse 24: “Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.” He was unconnected; he was cast adrift on a sea of doubt, worry, and uncertainty.

Maybe that is what Jesus was referring to with his words about seeing and believing. Maybe it isn’t simply about recognizing what we won’t have. As much as we might want to, we won’t get to sit at Jesus’ feet, hear his teachings, and see his miracles like the first ones did. Some interpret those final verses as Jesus saying, “it’s ok, never mind, just enjoy what you get.”

But maybe there is more to it than that. Maybe Jesus is helping us realize that seeing isn’t really believing after all. Maybe he is hinting that being is believing. Maybe we come closer to believing when we are being like Christ, when we show our wounds to the world, when our hope leads the way then leads us to deeper belief in the one we call Christ.

The glory and celebration of Easter is wonderful and necessary to our lives of faith. But we can’t put all our eggs in that Easter basket. The world goes on. We’ve slept since then, and our perennial

question arises: “Now what?”

Well, now there’s blessing—a blessing in being.

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