

## Gospel Reflection – Session #12

**Poor old doubting Thomas!** For the last 2000 years, he’s been saddled with the label “Doubting Thomas” just because he wasn’t prepared to take someone else’s word for the fact that Jesus had risen... It is easy to overlook the way the passage begins. The disciples are huddled in a room, “for fear of the Jews.” Just a couple of weeks earlier they had been on top of the world. Jesus was enormously popular with the people, and the disciples, by association, were caught up in that affection. However, in the space of just a few short days, their world had turned upside down. Now they were cowering in a closed up room, afraid for their lives in case those who handed Jesus over for death came for them as well. Into this fear and uncertainty steps Jesus who says, “Peace be with you.” It is a reminder of Jesus calming the storm out on the lake—in the midst of turmoil and anxiety he brings peace and calm.

Once Thomas encounters Jesus, he abandons his claims about needing proof and proclaims, “My Lord and my God!” This is an absolutely extraordinary statement of faith. For the very first time, someone recognizes Jesus, not as Messiah, prophet or Lord, but as God.

### **Historical Context** – *My Lord and my God*

This extraordinarily clear statement of belief about the divinity of Jesus appears nowhere else in any of the four gospels. Why does the Gospel of John make this statement and not any of the other gospels? It must be remembered that the Gospel of John was the last of the four gospels to be written—at least 20 years after the Gospel of Mark and some 60 to 70 years after the death of Jesus. The early Christians had been cast out of the Jewish tradition and were making sense of how their own beliefs could stand apart from Jewish tradition. With the break from Judaism, Christians felt able to express their belief that Jesus was God.

### **Those who have not seen...**

Jesus says to Thomas, “You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.” *That’s us!* Jesus’ words in the gospel are meant for people like us living today. We are not in the position of Thomas and the other disciples who were able to see the risen Lord face to face and so convince themselves of his rising. The gospel recognizes that to believe in the resurrection without that physical, personal encounter with Jesus is to be celebrated even more. Happy are we—blessed are we—who have not seen and yet still believe!

### **Questions for Youth**

- What aspects of this gospel passage stand out or have special significance?
- Why were the disciples in hiding at the start of this passage?
- Why might Thomas have been so reluctant to believe without seeing Jesus for himself?
- How is Thomas like many people today?

### **Questions for Parents/Sponsors**

- Do you think Thomas was doubting the resurrection or his friends? (both?)
- What word or phrase from the gospel passage stands out to you?
- In what situations do you most need to hear Jesus’ words, “Peace be with you”?
- In what ways can you relate to Thomas’ experience?

**Digging Deeper:** How can we compare modern society with the doubts of Thomas?

© Greg Sunter (*edited for OneWith*)