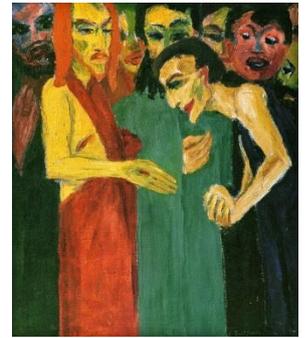


The Story of Thomas:

For Adults:

There are many things in our modern society that we take on trust. A lot of us don't really understand electricity, but we happily use it all the time. Without such trust our society falls apart.

Faith operates in a similar way. We rely on the evidence of witnesses, and history, and the Scriptures that bring the stories to us. Those first disciples were convinced – by the resurrection appearances – that Jesus had broken the power of death. Some, such as Thomas, needed more convincing. He was not convinced only by being told; he needed to see for himself. But then, Thomas makes the strongest statement of any of them: 'My Lord and my God!'



But what about us? As Christians today we have to take on trust what those first witnesses believed about Jesus and his resurrection. Some people will not take it immediately at face value. Some of us need to make sure that it is not counterfeit, or based on delusions. Some of us will keep testing it throughout our lives. But that's all right – after all, the consequences of believing are truly life-changing.

Remember that Jesus was not restricted by the conditions laid down by Thomas: for in the end Thomas believes without putting his finger into the place where the nails entered, or his hand into our Lord's side. Thus Jesus offers Thomas what he requires and invites him not to doubt but to believe. What is clear from the NT is that Jesus gave himself to each according to their need. Hence He came to Thomas to be handled and to be felt; to the women in the garden, to Peter, and to the rest to be seen, listened to and conversed with; to Paul on the road to Damascus literally in a blinding light. And he comes to the church of today through His words and life; through the Apostles' witness, and in the sacraments, in the lives of saints and in the death of martyrs.

In many ways then this story of so-called 'doubting Thomas' provides us with solid grounds for comfort and hope, teaching us that it was no easier to believe in Thomas' day than it is now – for faith abolishes distinctions, not only between Jews and Gentiles, but also between the contemporaries of Jesus and later generations. That indeed is the reason why Saint John assures later readers that his Gospel provides all that they need to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing they may have life in His name. The readers therefore will not be in an inferior position to those who knew Jesus; for as we've seen, Thomas found it just as hard to allow Jesus into the 'locked' places of his life as might we. Moreover this story also teaches us to be honest about our doubts, because just as Jesus helped to cure Thomas' unbelief, so can he ours. Christian faith then has to be a process of questioning and struggle, because that's the only way that we grow in faith and trust of our Lord, opening the door to him wider and wider.

For children:

Thomas was the only disciple to be absent on Easter Day. How did that feel?

What does it feel like to be left out of something that all your friends are talking about?

- ✚ You might feel miserable, isolated and alone and not part of what they experienced
- ✚ Isolation is not easy. Have you had any illnesses when you weren't allowed to see your friends? Chickenpox or measles perhaps? Shared experiences and community is really important – we need to remember to keep in touch with our friends during this Coronavirus time of being cut off from others outside our family.

Why do you think Thomas found it so hard to believe his friends? Was he right to voice his doubts? Should he have kept quiet and gone along with the crowd?

- ✚ It's important to voice our doubts about anything because it's only through questioning that we grow. Asking is the only way to increase understanding
- ✚ Doubts can be the thing that leads us to discover the truth about something
- ✚ Doubts lead to a stronger faith in the end – that's what happened to Thomas – he makes the strongest declaration of faith of all the disciples 'My Lord and my God'. We think that he went on to become a missionary in India.

What do you think Thomas felt when he finally saw Jesus?

- ✚ Embarrassment?
- ✚ Relief?
- ✚ Joy?



Was Jesus cross with Thomas? No, remember

- ✚ He made a special appearance to meet what Thomas needed to believe
- ✚ Thomas isn't scolded by Jesus. Jesus simply offers Thomas what he needs in order to believe

If Jesus wasn't cross with Thomas why does Jesus say that those who believe in Him without seeing him are the ones who are blessed?

- ✚ Jesus was trying to show that it was as hard for some people to believe in Jesus' own time as it is today
- ✚ We have all we need to believe in Jesus

How do we cope with anxiety and worries and fear?

- ✚ We ask Jesus for help – the experience of Thomas helps us here because Jesus knew Thomas' anxieties and helped him overcome them. Jesus will do the same for us if we ask for help.