

## THOMAS – THE RATIONAL MAN

*May the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in thy sight O Lord our strength and our Redeemer (Psalm 19:14) Amen*

You have just heard our Gospel reading this morning and you may be surprised that I am going suggest to you that we be more like Thomas. Not by doubting our faith but being honest with our faith.

Let me remind you again of the story of Thomas's and the risen Lord. On the evening of that first day when Jesus appeared to the disciples - Thomas was not with them (verse 24). And so the next time when all the apostles met together, this time including Thomas, the only person who had not seen the risen Christ – was him! And despite the testimonies of the Apostles and indeed the claims of the women (who had seen the risen Lord) Thomas would not believe.

You see, Thomas was a rational guy. He would gladly believe when given reason to do so. But until he had the proof, until he had seen the mark of the nails in his hands, and put his hand in his side, he would not believe. And he is quite firm about this. Verse 25, 'I will not believe.' Thomas was of the mind that whoever the disciples and the women had seen that day, it was not the Jesus whom he knew and loved. It couldn't be – because Jesus had died!

*And so since that day poor old Thomas has been stuck with the moniker, 'Doubting Thomas.'*

But let me ask you? can you blame him? Can you blame Thomas for the position that he took? You see Thomas was a heart and soul man. We are told in the Gospel accounts that he was ready to die for Jesus (John 11:16). He had gone all out for the Lord! And all it got him was doubt and disappointment. He had risked everything for Jesus - only to see the

man he was following, put on a cross and killed. And he was not going to go down that road again.

Well, I think many of us can relate to Thomas. You see there are many of us who have trusted in the Lord, like Thomas did, only to see things fall apart in front of us. It can happen in so many different ways. Sickness and ill-health, job stress, losing your job, relationship issues, marriages disintegrating, mental illness, bereavement. And in the middle of this you have prayed – and nothing has happened. Well that was Thomas.

Recently I have been reading the psalms of David. And David was another man who had seen his faith tested. He had been betrayed by his closest comrade, and in his old age David saw his family fall apart. His children were fighting over money and inheritance, and there was David in his twilight years. But David in his wisdom set his eyes on the Lord. On the eternal. Psalm 37 :7, 'Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.'

And this is one thing that Thomas had to learn. Like David, Thomas had to learn that just because he believed in Christ, life was going to be a piece of cake. If you think like that you are going to have a rude awakening. Patience was required by Thomas. The type of patience that was going to make him sit back and contemplate - and recognise that whatever answer Christ was going to give, he was going to have to wait!

Thomas had to wait another eight days after Jesus had appeared to the rest of the disciples. This was a long time for him to wait. But we should not be totally surprised by this. You see the Lord will always do things in his time, not ours! And we need to get to realize this.

Throughout our Lord's ministry we see people having to wait patiently, despite the difficulties and challenges which come with that. Some even tried to hurry the Lord – but to no avail. Think of Mary and Martha who had to wait until their brother died before Jesus arrived. They were

unaware that the delay was to glorify God. Or what about Jairus's daughter? He was the leader of the synagogue and an upstanding member of the community. Yet Jairus had to learn to wait. To wait patiently for the Lord. And that waiting involved Jesus healing someone else before he came to his beloved daughter. All these people, Mary, Martha, Jairus, and indeed Thomas had to learn to wait patiently.

And sometimes that patience is extraordinary, like the Apostle Paul. Paul prayed three times for God to help him.

*'Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for my power is made perfect in weakness."' (2 Cor. 12:9)*

The help that Paul felt he needed never came. He had to rely on the Lord and trust that whatever was needed, the Lord would provide.

All these great men and women of faith had to learn to wait patiently for the Lord, as David did.

*'Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.'*

So we must not be surprised when times are tough and the Lord seems to be taking his time. He may, like with Thomas, be addressing something far more important in our thinking than we are aware of. It may not feel fair at the time but God knows what is needed. You see, The Lord's ways are higher than our ways.

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 58:9 KJV)*

He hadn't forgotten Thomas and He has hasn't forgotten you! The Lord's timing is perfect, unlike our own. So during this Eastertide if there is something that you are struggling with that you have brought to the

Lord but you haven't the answer you want. Do not despair! And do not believe the Lord is ignoring you. Or that the Lord hasn't heard what you have said. The Lord hears everything! He knows everything about you. And the Lord is on your case, and my case. And remember, the Lord's intention is for your good. What you may want, may not be what the Lord wants to give you, because he knows that the answer is not for your eternal good. That has to be our perspective! This was a lesson that Thomas had to learn!