



John 20:19-31 “Through believing, life”

I've always rather liked Thomas, both his need to know and his resolve to stand with Jesus no matter the danger. And it's partly because of Thomas that we have the answer to a very important question.

The first time Thomas receives individual mention in the gospels is when Jesus decides to respond to Mary and Martha's appeal to come to them because Lazarus is ill and at the point of dying. The disciples all caution Jesus that it is too dangerous for him to go so close to Jerusalem. They warn him that there are factions that want to kill him. When it's evident that Jesus is going despite the danger, it is Thomas who speaks up ... taking his stand and urging the others to do likewise. “Let us go also, that we may die with him.” [John 11:16b]

Days later, now in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, Jesus begins to encourage and offer comfort to his best friends, to those whom he has chosen to walk beside him in ministry. He rationalizes with them that since they believe in God, they can believe in him also. Then, he says that he's going away, to prepare a place for them to which they cannot yet come. He assures them that they know the way to the place where he is going. It's Thomas again, who feels lost in the tangle of words and prophecy he doesn't understand. So he asks, for himself, and for all of us, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” [John 14:5b] Because of that question, we know that Jesus himself is the way, the truth and the life. We know that living in concert with Jesus brings fullness of life, meaning, purpose, hope, promise.

Today, we engage with a “it's too much to be hoped for – too much to be believed” Thomas. We don't know why he wasn't with the other disciples the first time the resurrected Lord came to them. We only know that Thomas heard their story, their testimony and he can't quite get his head around it. With intensity and passion, he voices his desperate longing to see and touch and know for himself.

It's because of Thomas, that we can know that we will never be condemned for our questions or our doubts. In fact, watch with the bewildered Thomas, feel his heart hammer with hunger within him as he sees Jesus approach him, as he hears Jesus speak his name and invite him to touch the nail prints, the hole in his side.

Jesus knows how hard it is to believe without seeing, although he speaks a blessing for those who nevertheless do come to believe without seeing.

Walking with Thomas, who loves Jesus to the point of being willing to die with him, inspires me. He shows that while he had doubts, he doesn't give up his search for truth. He gathers with the others. He watches with them, waiting. He's almost afraid to hope, and yet he comes with expectancy and openness until the One who is his life's focus and his reason for living shows Himself. It's not in disbelief that Thomas lives these days following Jesus' horrific death on the cross. It is for him, a time of searching, of longing to go deeper with Jesus, of yearning for a renewed relationship with his Saviour and his God.

And the searching, the longing and yearning were not in vain. Jesus gave to Thomas, when Thomas was ready, that which he needed in order to believe. And in believing, Thomas' life was restored, renewed, begun brand new.

As we celebrate this second Sunday of Easter [Easter being simply too “big” for just one day], I’d like to share a story ... The author is unknown. It was taken from the Wayne Nebraska Hospice Newsletter.

Once upon a time, twin boys were conceived in the same womb. Weeks passed, as the twins developed. As their awareness grew, they laughed for joy: “Isn’t it great that we were conceived? Isn’t it great to be alive?”

Together, the twins explored their world. When they found their mother’s cord which gave them life, they sang for joy: “How great is our mother’s love, that she shares her own life with us.”

As the weeks stretched into months, the twins noticed how much each was changing. “What does it mean?” asked the one. “It means that our stay in this world is drawing to an end,” said the other. “But I don’t want to go,” said the one. “I want to stay here always.” “We have no choice,” said the other. “But maybe there is life after birth!” “But how can there be?” responded the one. “We will shed our life cord, and how is life possible without it? Besides, we have seen evidence that others were here before us, and none of them have returned to tell us that there is life after birth. No, this is the end.”

And so the one fell into deep despair, saying, “If conception ends in birth, what is the purpose of life in the womb? It’s meaningless! Maybe there is no mother after all!” “But there has to be,” protested the other. “How else did we get there? How do we remain alive?”

“Have you ever seen our mother?” said the one. “Maybe she lives only in our minds. Maybe we made her up, because the idea made us feel good!”

And so the last days in the womb were filled with deep questioning and fear. Finally the moment of birth arrived. When the twins had passed from their world, they opened their eyes and cried for joy. For what they saw exceeded their fondest dreams.

May the promises of the Lord be your strength, for this day, for our living and serving together, and for always. Amen.