

Sermon for Sunday 12 April 2026

Sunday of Easter

Acts 2: 14a, 22 – 32; 1 Peter 1: 3 – 9; John 20: 19 – end

From Doubt to Faith

I wonder if you have been following Artemis II? The extraordinary and apparently seamlessly successful mission feels oddly out of kilter to me with events happening down here on earth. It might indeed be difficult to believe that four human beings have just travelled around the moon and come back again if we didn't have the pictures to prove it, and if we hadn't heard their voices speaking from space. As we say – seeing is believing.

For the same length of time, and roughly the same time as the crew of Artemis II were in space, in our church services we've been acting out the drama of the last 10 days or so of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. From Palm Sunday through Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. If you follow

through all the services, it's something of a rollercoaster ride! Then, after all the excitement of Easter Sunday, the empty tomb and the appearance to the two Marys in the garden, the lectionary gives us this story about Thomas, who finds it difficult to believe that Jesus has been raised.

As Thomas moves from doubt to radiant faith, we too are invited to pause, and reflect on our faith. Where are we on the spectrum of doubt to faith in Jesus as our resurrected Lord? And if we find ourselves more in doubt than in faith, what can we do about it?

So, staying with Thomas. What do we know about him?

He is mentioned as one of the twelve in all four Gospels, and he appears in just three incidents in John's Gospel. From these incidents he seems to have a pronounced tendency to be negative. Perhaps he was even one of those people who, when presented with a new idea immediately says "that'll never work" or "not invented here". I have to admit to sharing some of that myself!

The first time we meet him is in the story of Lazarus. The disciples are trying to persuade Jesus that it is too dangerous for him to make the journey to Judea now that Lazarus is dead. Thomas pipes up “Let us also go that we may die with him”. (John 11:16) He’s either being pointlessly brave or somewhat cynical. I suspect the latter! The second time we hear Thomas’ voice is when he interrupts Jesus trying to reassure the disciples at the last supper when He knows He is soon to die. It’s a famous passage, often used at funerals. When Jesus says “And you know the way to the place where I am going” Thomas replies, rather petulantly, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?” To which Jesus responds with “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14: 4 – 7).

Now, in today’s Gospel, Thomas has somehow missed out on seeing Jesus when he appeared to

the rest of the disciples on the evening of the day of resurrection. It is not enough for Thomas that the others tell him they have seen the Lord. He needs proof. Not just to see Jesus, but also to see and touch His wounds. Without this he will not believe. Thomas sets out his requirements for faith in the resurrection.

With extraordinary graciousness, Jesus repeats his appearance to the disciples a week later. He invites Thomas not only to see, but to touch his wounds, just as he had demanded. And he says “Do not doubt, but believe” (John 20: 27). Jesus has responded to what Thomas felt he needed. It’s not clear, however, that when it came to it Thomas did need to touch Jesus’ wounds. Perhaps seeing Jesus was enough for him too. He moves so quickly from faithless insistence on proof to an unparalleled expression of faith. “My Lord and my God!” No one else, not even the impulsive Peter has ever stated before that Jesus is God. Thomas was clearly listening to what Jesus said to him at the Last Supper. To know Jesus is to

know the Father. In a flash he understands and accepts this with all of his being.

We don't know with any certainty how Thomas lived out his faith in the rest of his life, but there is a tradition that he took the Gospel to India where he was martyred.

This is a supremely hopeful story for those who find faith difficult – which is all of us some of the time. John records Jesus saying to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (John 20: 29). That is all of us. Through the whole of John's Gospel God reaches out to us, as John says “so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20: 31).

May we too have the audacity of Thomas, to ask God for what we need to make our faith as radiant and real as his became.

Amen

Revd Diana Young