

How we are remembered, or at the least referred to by others, is often due to one incident, even a moment in a life, and that becomes the mark of that life. Sometimes of significance, other times not. And this is so with the disciples. Peter is referred to more as the rock, than the three time deny-er. John being the disciple Jesus loved, a term he uses for himself throughout his Gospel. Not waiting to hear other's assessment, declaring it for himself. How many of us would be that bold? We have Judas the betrayer, and this morning Thomas the doubter. There is always more to a life than a one liner, a single moment. We can all thank God for that.

As with Thomas. A disciple only mentioned in John's gospel. When Jesus turned his face toward Jerusalem the disciples thought that it would be certain death for all of them. It was Thomas who said:

Then let us go so that we may die with him.

It was a courageous statement yet Thomas is not remembered for saying that. It is also not remembered that in this story of Thomas' doubt we have the one place of the Gospels where the Divinity of Christ is bluntly and boldly stated. The story that gives Thomas his infamous nickname, the doubter, is the same story that has Thomas making an earth shattering, confession of faith.

My Lord, and my God. Not teacher. Not Messiah. God.

It is the only place, only time, only person where Jesus is called God without qualification of any kind. You are my Lord and my God.

These are no words of a doubter. And yet, this is how Thomas is remembered. Doubting Thomas.

Though as Alfred Lloyd Tennyson once said:

There lies more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds.

Thomas was as bold and blunt in his doubt as he was in his declaration of the divinity of Jesus.

You may have noticed that Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus came amongst them that day as we heard from the Gospel. Perhaps he was not fearful as the other disciples and did not need to resort to gathering behind a locked door. Bold and blunt.

Thomas had witnessed miracles and had heard the teaching of Jesus and had even been prepared to die with him. And even with this, he makes his demand for tangible proof of the risen Jesus. Taking the word of another does not suffice, is not enough for Thomas. He has his own criteria for believing, and community acclaim that this is so, is not one of them.

What would be your criteria for believing? What is your criteria?

Thomas says he needs to probe the flesh of Jesus to believe. He wants a physical confirmation in order to be convinced.

The only way Thomas will believe is not in the touching of the wounds as he claims, but in the entering into the wounds of Jesus, and of his own self. Jesus asks Thomas to reach out and live forever. As we are asked. To reach out; of the physical. To reach out; of the need for proof, for certainty. Enter into the wounds of life you are carrying, as Jesus carries. Reach out and live forever.

Belief did not originally mean believing a set of doctrines. In both Greek and Latin, credo the word we get the word creed means, 'I give my heart to.' In English prior to about 1600 the meaning of believe was more 'to hold dear.' To believe meant not only confidence and trust in a person, but also to hold that person dear. To believe meant to 'belove' that person, to give your heart to that person. The word 'heart' being used as a metaphor for the self.
To whom do you give your heart, your self?
To whom do you commit yourself?

We do not know where Thomas was, or why he was not with them. He chose not to be, as he chooses not to believe what the disciples reported what they saw and heard in his absence. Thomas needs to see with his eyes and hear with his own ears. In fact that is not enough he has to place his finger in the wound the nails left in his hands and his hand in the wound caused by the sword of the soldier. If he was so much in need of being a physical witness why would he not stay close ... at the cross, at the tomb and now with the disciples? And yet he goes his own way and then complains when stuff happens when he is not there. We have this choice ... to believe or to not ... and to complain when stuff happens.

The words of Thomas' confession My Lord, and my God are the last spoken words by a disciple in the Gospel of John as it was originally written. Nothing more could be said about Jesus. The last words from Jesus in John's gospel, again as it was originally written, are in the form of a beatitude ...

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe. More words were deemed necessary to be added to this Gospel – however that would be a whole other sermon. One I am sure we all look forward to.

For now, for us ...

Blessed are you and me for believing that which we cannot see.

Wendy