

**Sunday evening April 8<sup>th</sup> 2018 at CBC**  
**Sermon outline: John 20:19-31**

*John 20:30-31*

*30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. NIV*

John's purpose in writing the gospel is to bring his readers to the point of personal faith in Jesus Christ.

**[1] HOW DO YOU ARRIVE AT THE POINT OF FAITH?**

At one level, that is easy enough to answer because John gives us the answer in verses 30-31.

We (his readers in all ages) are to accept the validity of the events about which he has written.

*'Mary went .. and **saw**' [1]*

*'John **looked in** at the strips of linen lying there [5]*

*'He **saw** the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.' [6-8]*

*'He **saw** and believed.' [8]*

*'At this, she turned around and **saw** Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.' [14]*

*'**I have seen** the Lord!' [18]*

*'After he said this, **he showed them** his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they **saw** the Lord.' [20]*

*'We have **seen** the Lord!' [25]*

*'Put your finger here, **see** my hands.'* [27]

*'Because you have **seen** me, you have believed.'* [29]

While this should give us confidence in the reliability of the message it also raises a question. If the first Christians believed the message because they were eye-witnesses to the events, how are we supposed to believe now? Are we not 'second-class citizens' in the kingdom because we have not had the opportunity to see first-hand what they saw?

## **[2] AREN'T WE AT A DISADVANTAGE BECAUSE WE ARE NOT EYE-WITNESSES?**

To find the answer, we go further back in John 20, from verses 30-31 to verse 29. And the answer we find is, 'no!'

In appearing to Thomas, the Lord does two things.

### **[i] He resolves the doubts of his contemporary disciple - Thomas**

Thomas now has no reason to disbelieve and every reason to believe. We don't know whether he actually needed to touch the body of Jesus or not. But we do know that he now believed on that evening as absolutely as he had refused to believe a week previously.

### **[ii] He answers the doubts of his future disciples**

In the process of confirming Thomas's faith he also answers the questions that would be raised by a future generation of disciples.

The Lord makes it very clear that there will be no disadvantage for those who believe without seeing the physical evidence. Those who do not see are blessed!

We have the personal authority of Jesus that if we have believed in him without seeing him we are blessed people, people blessed by God.

Peter, In writing to Christians who had not seen Jesus's resurrection (whereas he had) would later put it like this:

*1 Peter 1:8-9*

*8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. NIV*

### **[3] HOW CAN WE KNOW IF OUR FAITH IS GENUINE?**

In Thomas's confession of faith, he is recognising, with all due reverence, at least two things:

#### **[i] the man standing before him is God in human form**

Some critics have argued that this expression cannot be authentic because such a 'developed' view of Jesus emerged only later, as represented by the NT letters. But Thomas is articulating the conclusion drawn from all that he had seen Jesus say and do. Who else can this be, standing before him now, but God in human form, the one he knows as Jesus?

#### **[ii] the man standing before him is his rightful Lord.**

Thomas is expressing his worship of Jesus as God and his personal commitment of faith and obedience to Jesus: 'My Lord and my God.' This is an expression of devotion, of discipleship and is also a permanent example of authentic faith – authentic not just because of what he said, but because Jesus endorsed what he said.

#### **[4] IS FAITH BASED ON OUR OWN RESOURCES?**

In John 20:19-23 we find Jesus 'commissioning' his disciples. It is not the same event as that which is described in Matthew 28. It is perhaps a kind of anticipation of what would happen on the day of Pentecost. There is apparently good reason for translating verse 22 as, 'Jesus breathed and said...'. He is not imparting the Holy Spirit to the disciples by his breath, but he is indicating in advance that the breath of God's Spirit will come upon them in due course, which is what happened on the day of Pentecost. At the same time, he is summarising for them the overall effect of their ministry as it would be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In short, those who received their word would know their sins forgiven. Those who rejected their word would not.

And their forgiving of others – by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and by people accepting their message – would be done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is the work of the Spirit of God both to empower those who share the good news of Jesus with others and also to enable those who accept the message to do so.

Faith is not just a matter of our own resources. The power to proclaim the message and the ability to receive it are both processes empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is not a matter of having enough faith to believe; if we hear the message, we must respond to it.