**Jesus and Thomas**

**The Word**

Read together John 20:19-31

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What about Thomas’ experience is most standing out to you and why?

2. Sunday’s message considers the relationship between faith, sight, and understanding. Consider Augustine’s quote from Sunday: “Believe so that you may understand.” What does that mean? Do you think that’s the right way to approach faith and understanding?

3. Sunday’s sermon ended with an encouragement to open ourselves to being addressed and spoken to by God. Several avenues of hearing God speak to us were mentioned: Scripture, friends, prayer, creation. What is your expectation for hearing God’s voice? Where have you most experienced him speaking to you?

**Sermon Outline**

I. The purpose of John’s gospel

A. John writes with two purposes: “that they would believe Jesus was the son of God, and by believing they would experience life.”

B. John writes so that our belief in Jesus as God and giver of life would deepen, and he writes for all people, perhaps especially with a heart for those who might be skeptical.  Why else include the story of Thomas, a story of skepticism, in the very same chapter of the powerful joy of Christ’s resurrection.

II. Believers vs. skeptics

A. Some people are natural trusters of people and their motives while others are natural skeptics.

B. Some skepticism is simply reasonable, but part of John’s purpose is to help us to become believers.

III. Thomas

A. By all accounts, Thomas was a faithful disciple.  Consider his statement in John 11: “Let’s go that we may die with him.”

B. The previous scene of Jesus’ supernatural visit to the disciples is replayed almost exactly for Thomas: Again, the doors are locked, Jesus greets Thomas, “Peace be with you,” and he shows Thomas his wounds, as he did for the other disciples.

C. At that moment, Thomas’ unbelief collapses.

D. Thomas’ declaration: “My Lord and my God” is the High Point of John’s Gospel, and the highest declaration of Jesus’ divinity.

IV. Jesus' response to Thomas’

A. “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

B. Jesus’ isn’t necessarily saying that seeing is somehow inferior when it comes to belief. In fact, Jesus included some of his signs so that people might see them and believe

C. But we also know that seeing was not always believing for those who saw these miracles.

V. Belief in the age of the Spirit

A. *But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you*

B. Belief emerges as one finds themselves personally addressed by Jesus. Consider Mary addressed by name at the tomb, or Nathaniel addressed by Jesus in John 1, or the woman at the well, or Thomas.

 C. We can say two things about coming to deeper belief

1. All ways are God ways. He can make use of anything; belief is not something we grind out but something he does in us. If you’ve ever asked people consistently how they came to believe, the variety of stories is astonishing.  Certainly testimony, reason, apologetics have opened many people up to God, but there are too many ways to list.

2. But Jesus’s words to Thomas *are telling* about how we open to God and deeper belief: “Stop doubting and believe.”

a. We easily develop cynicism about life, especially as life often lets us down

b. We are called to live a life in which we seek belief

1) “faith seeking understanding” Anselm

2) “believe so that you may understand” Augustine

c. This means being open to being addressed, spoken to, befriended by Jesus along the way.

1) This might look like reading and hearing the Scriptures looking and listening for God speaking to you as the true telos of Scripture reading.

2) It means having relationships with others who walk with Jesus and to let them speak into our lives to let Jesus address us through others and their stories.

3) It is to put yourself in the places God has made, creation, the church, the symbols of the faith, and let Jesus speak to you when he wills to.

4) It is to speak honestly to God, in prayer, or however you do so, to ask for what you need or desire. And listen to the God who knows you, who loves you, who addresses you, and receiving it, let *Him* be the one who deepens your belief.