

"My Lord and My God!"

Thomas Robinson, September 26, 2010

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that **first day of the week**, when the **disciples** were together, with the **doors locked** for **fear** of the Jewish leaders, **Jesus came** and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**"

²⁰ After he said this, he **showed them his hands and side**. The disciples were **overjoyed** when **they saw the Lord**. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "**Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**"

²² And with that he **breathed on them** and said, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**" ²³ *If you forgive the sins of anyone, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*"

²⁴ Now **Thomas** (also known as Didymus), one of the **Twelve**, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "**We have seen the Lord!**"

But he said to them, "**Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.**"

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the **doors were locked**, **Jesus came** and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**"

²⁷ Then he said to **Thomas**, "*Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. **Stop doubting and believe**(Don't be faithless but believing).*"

²⁸ Thomas said to him, "**My Lord and my God!**"

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "*Because you have **seen** me, you have **believed**; **blessed** are those who have **not seen** and **yet have believed.***"

³⁰ Jesus performed (did) **many other 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 Messiah, the Son of God**, and that **by believing you may have life in his name**.

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**, and the man became a living being.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*"

John 2:19-22 ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.*" ... ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John 14:5-7 ⁵ Thomas said to him, "*Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?*" ⁶ Jesus answered, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" ⁷ *If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.*"

Jesus Commissions Disciples

John is helping us to open ourselves to the reality of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

We have watched the puzzlement of Peter and the Beloved Disciple at the tomb.

We have seen the persistence of Mary M. seeking Jesus. Jesus calls her and sends her to the other disciples: *"I have seen the Lord!"* The disciples struggle with fear.

They lock themselves in. Unrealistic fear. Powerless. Jesus comes among the disciples.

More than the 12 – a substantial group around the 12 – the community of followers.

Peace, Shalom. (14:27; 16:33). Calls them back to his last saying: "I have overcome..."

He shows hands and side. Why? Why doesn't he go over his basic teachings? Make sure they can repeat his guidance for life accurately. His hands embody a new world. He is the same Jesus. Very physical. Not healed but raised. Death has been conquered. Jesus begins God's new creation beyond death. Elevated union of incorruptible physical body and the life of God's Spirit.

His hands and side point to the event of the cross, what happened. Not abstract doctrine but concrete event now seen in new way revealing a reality that remakes everything.

In Jesus, God was really there on that cross taking on himself our betrayal, denial, cowardice, injustice, mockery, scorn, forsakenness, loneliness, pain, suffering, sin.

The resurrected hands truly are God's defeat of sin, death, fear. They are the future.

The disciples begin to see: Joy breaks out. Like Mary, they have seen the Lord.

Jesus immediately gives them a task clearly beyond their abilities. *"As the Father sent me..."* No locked doors. No fear. Go out. What I have been, you will be. Bear witness to truth. Be light. Show the face of the Father. Live the reality of God here and now.

Jesus breathes on them. (John repeats the verb used in Gen 2:7.) New creation. The community of disciples receives the inbreaking of God's own life / Spirit / Paraclete. They have a crucial role in the life of the world. Not arbitrary authority but participation in the work of the Lamb of God. They receive the gift of life not to hold but to give.

The Special Case of Thomas

Thomas was not present, one of the 12, core witnesses. Thomas is not different from the others but the same. He forcefully states his need to see, touch. *"I will certainly not believe!"* Believe what? He has already followed Jesus, agrees with his teaching.

Thomas sees what is at stake. Like Mary, he has processed Jesus' death. Failed hopes.

Unjust death. It's hard, but he can deal with that. That's just reality. Or is it? Do you realize what you are saying? Resurrection is the end of the world! What world do I live in? What is its deepest reality and meaning? God among us. God died for us! Jesus had told Thomas, *"I am the way, truth, life..."* (14:6-7) Could it really be?

The story is not about Thomas' doubt. It is about Jesus' grace in giving Thomas all that he could ask for. He is welcomed to touch, but does not. He sees, realizes, knows that he must live in the reality defined by Jesus' grace, love, death, resurrection.

"My Lord and My God!" Profoundly personal but also cosmic, new creation.

The Case of Us!

John records Jesus' blessing on all *"who have not seen and believe"* and then looks up from his writing directly at us. What Mary, the Disciples, Thomas saw in Jesus was not just personal wisdom, insight, but the true reality of our world today and always.

Jesus is Messiah, giver of life, who calls you to receive the Holy Spirit, enter His own life.