

April 24, 2022

Thomas Sunday

John 20:19-31

Can I be a witness of Jesus's resurrection? That is a great question especially on Thomas Sunday. Most often in order for someone to be a witness they have to actually be there to see it happen. I strongly stress the part about seeing the thing happen. Our society relies very strongly on what we have seen in order to be a good witness. So that other people may believe what you are saying based on what you have seen. We really see this on legal dramas on TV.

There are big events in every generation. Things that people have watched and were witnesses too. All in order so that they may believe it happened. I remember my grandfather telling me that he remembered where he was when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. He was. He was eating a slice of pizza and watching it on a TV in the Sears store window. Some people of this generation may ask you, where were you when 9/11 happened? I was making a church deposit at the bank at 9:20 AM. Jesus's resurrection was the monumental event of His generation and for generations to come for the next 2000 years. So people would ask, where were you last Sunday when Jesus rose from the dead? Did you see Him or the empty tomb? All good questions to see if you witnessed these amazing events and if you believe.

However, we all need to see these events for ourselves in order to believe they happened. WE need to watch: the moon landing, 9/11, the fall of the Berlin wall to satisfy our curiosity. These events make an impression on our minds. So much so that we remember where we were and what we were doing. WE tend to rely strongly upon what we have seen. Mind you there are some people who love to hear a great story and that satisfies them.

The spreading of the Good News, that Jesus has risen from the dead, depended on witness. That people actually saw Him with their two eyes. This is actually a very big part of Jewish culture. You have to have seen it happen in order to be a witness. Hearsay, gossip or second and stories does not work for Jewish people. So this helps us understand Thomas's problem. Most of the story about the events in John's gospel is about witness. Everything depends upon what the disciples and apostles have seen with their two eyes.

Mary Magdalene was the first to witness the Risen Lord. She sees Jesus outside of the tomb and talks with Him. That is a very powerful witness in Jewish culture of her day. Later on Jesus appears to the disciples and apostles and then sends them out into the world to do God's work. Another powerful witness but with a job to do. Unfortunately, Thomas was not with them for any of this. So they witnessed to Thomas what they saw and heard. Yet it was not enough for him to believe the events or the good news.

Thomas had a very hard time believing the other disciples and apostles. Their witness is hard to believe and understand. Mostly due to their culture at the time. Thomas could not repeat what the others had told him about their encounters with Jesus. There has been nothing like this

in history. Nobody has ever risen from the dead. Then Thomas sets rules and conditions for himself in order to believe their witness, so he can become a witness. He has to put his finger in the holes in Jesus's hands. Then put his hand in the wound in Jesus's side. Those are some very big conditions Thomas has set in order to become a witness. Be careful what you wish for because it might come true.

Then a week later, Thomas has the opportunity to see Jesus with his own eyes. Now the witness that the other disciples gave him has become his witness now. Thomas believes only after seeing Jesus, talking with Him. Then putting his finger in the holes in Jesus's hand, and his hand in His side. That is some rock hard evidence and a very powerful witness. Thomas's wish for witness went far beyond the other disciples and apostles. Thomas actually got to touch the Risen Lord Jesus. Then after all of this, Jesus sends all those there out in to the world to be witnesses of His resurrection.

Jesus's words would ring true throughout the past 2000 years. "Blessed are those who believe and have not seen." Our faith is built on these words of Jesus. Most importantly it is built on the faith of our parents who raised us in the faith. Then our grandparents and great grand parents. All the way back to the disciples and apostles that Jesus sends out into the world to be witnesses and to give witness to His resurrection. We are a part of a long line of witnesses throughout history.

The most beautiful part of the story of the curious or inquisitive Thomas is the hope it offers us. There will be times in our lives that our faith may be on shaky ground or we may doubt it. Yet Jesus is always there. He will pursue us as He did with Thomas and reassure our faith

in Him. God does not forget us. Be careful of the conditions we may set. Jesus has a way of popping up in the most unexpected places in order to strengthen our witness.

So, back to our original question. WE most certainly can be witnesses to Jesus's resurrection. Even though we were not actually at the empty tomb on Easter morning. Our witness is strongly built on the witness of those who came before us. It starts in our families and goes right back to the disciples and apostles of Jesus. We continue this witness by passing the faith on to our children. We do this by baptising them, taking them to church and later confirming them. This is all very powerful stuff. This is witness rooted in faith. Christ is Risen, and that is a witness too, Pastor D