

THE LORD'S MESSAGE TO THOMAS

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Reading: John 20:19-29

You know the sad, yet wonderful story of Easter. It starts with Palm Sunday, when the Lord rode into Jerusalem as a King. Then the wicked leaders of the Jews tried to kill the Lord, and Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, betrayed Him, and He was led away and crucified. Can you think how the disciples must have felt, when they saw their Lord taken away like a robber and crucified, with two robbers on either side of Him? They must have felt terribly sad, and wondered what had happened, and why the Lord had let this terrible thing happen.

And then it seemed that the Lord was dead, and He was put in a sepulcher, which was like a big cave. A huge stone was rolled into the mouth of the sepulcher, and soldiers stood by the stone. For two days the disciples must have thought that the Lord was really dead, and they must have been very unhappy. You see, even though He had told them that He would rise again, they did not understand.

Then, on the third day, on Easter Sunday, some women came to the sepulcher, and found the great stone rolled away, and an angel was there who told them that the Lord had risen. They went and told the disciples, and Peter and John ran to the sepulcher to see for themselves. They didn't know what to think. But they were still frightened, and they hid from the Jews, in case their leaders might try to kill them too.

That night, there were ten of them in a locked room. There were twelve disciples altogether, but Judas was dead now, and Thomas was not there. And the Lord came to them. He didn't have to come through a door, He just appeared to them. He showed them that He really was alive, and He told them they didn't have to worry. You can imagine how very happy the disciples were, because now they knew that their Lord really was God, because He could rise from the dead. How thrilled they must have been to know that nothing could possibly hurt the Lord.

But Thomas, the disciple who was not there, couldn't believe it when they told him that they had seen the Lord. He didn't think it could be possible that the Lord should be able to do such a marvelous thing as to rise from the dead. Thomas was a good man. He loved the Lord very much. But he just didn't see how the Lord could rise from the dead. Do you remember what he said? He said that unless he could see the places where the soldiers had put nails in the

Lord's hands, and unless he could touch the Lord's side where one of the soldiers had put a spear into Him, he wouldn't believe. He said he had to see for himself.

Because Thomas was a good man, the Lord came to him after eight days, when he was with all the other disciples, and showed Himself to them again. He spoke to Thomas, and said that he could reach out his finger, and see the sores on His hands, and could put his hand into the hole in His side which the spear had made, and then he would believe. And Thomas believed, and called Him his Lord, and his God. Then the Lord said that Thomas should have believed without seeing.

We can understand why Thomas had such a hard time believing that the Lord had risen, can't we? Thomas didn't really understand that the Lord was God, and he also didn't know what we know about the life in heaven. He didn't realize that actually the Lord lifts every one who dies up into the spiritual world, even as He Himself rose from the dead on Easter morning. It just didn't seem possible to Thomas that the Lord could do this wonderful thing.

Now, we too might sometimes feel that the Lord can't do certain things which He has told us He will do. When we're unhappy, when we are tempted to do evil, we might think that the Lord can't possibly make us happy. We might become weak in our trust in the Lord, and wonder if, after all, He can really lead us to happiness. We might be a little like Thomas, who doubted, thinking the Lord could not possibly do a certain thing.

But we must remember that the Lord loved Thomas, for Thomas was a man who wanted to follow Him. And so the Lord came to him, and showed him that He really could do wonderful things, the same wonderful things He had promised to do. And so it is with us. If the Lord says that He will help us, and lead us, and bring us to happiness, He will do it.

The story of Thomas is a message to us not to doubt the power of the Lord. We need to trust in Him. We need that very much, for the hells know that if we trust in ourselves, if we turn away from the Lord and don't ask for His help, they will win. We will give in to evil, because we are not strong enough to fight it. The hells would love us to doubt the Lord, and not to trust in Him.

But He comes to us, just as He came to Thomas. He showed Thomas that He was more powerful and stronger than any one. For only God could rise from the dead, and stand before him, after he had seen His body buried in the sepulcher. The Lord God comes to us too—in His Word, in His teachings about His miracles and His strength—and He asks for us to trust Him. We must trust that He can overcome any evil, that there is nothing in us that He can't beat. We can fight any evil, if He is there.

That is the message the Lord gave to Thomas. And after the Lord went up into heaven, Thomas, like the other disciples, did not doubt again. He trusted the Lord, he was not afraid of the people who hated Christians. He may have been crucified also, because no one could make him deny his faith in the Lord. Evil could not make him doubt again, because he knew that the Lord was on his side. And today he is in heaven, where no one can ever hurt him again. That is the kind of faith the Lord wants us to have—so strong that it will never let evil turn it aside.

Amen.