

**Sermon Series: Christ at the Crossroads—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—3/27/2005**

**Text: John 20: 19-31**

**Title: Christ at the crossroads of doubt and faith**

**Intro:** *Ills: lead in of Jesus of Nazareth film with Mary and post-Easter disciples*

**Theme:** Doubt in our lives as believers is not a sin. Rather, what we let Christ do with those moments determines whether they will develop into faith builders or plunge us into the despair of unbelief.

***Doubt Emerges . . .***

- When life's circumstances go beyond our limits of understanding (**Print verse 19-20**)
  1. The disciples were shattered and scattered with fear brought on by death—Jesus' death
  2. **ILLUS.: Moments of Doubt in Our Life**
- When life's harshness jades our attitude to a cynical green
  3. Thomas at Lazarus death (John 11) "*Let us go to die with him*"
  4. Thomas, when Jesus talks of Heaven, "*Lord how can we know the way.*"
  5. Thomas "*was not with them*" (**Print verse. 24**)--not experience risen Jesus
  6. Easter's shouts and trumpets may be muted for you by the harsh realities you have just experienced
- When Christ leads us to the edges of faith
  7. Thomas said, "*I will not believe*"--because his hope in Jesus as Savior, for all he knew, lay cold and dead in a grave
  8. Jesus stretches our faith so he might be glorified and we might grow
    1. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4: 7-11--*afflicted/ crushed; perplexed/ despairing; persecuted/ forsaken; struck down/ destroyed--always carrying around the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*"

***When We Stand at the Crossroad of Faith and Unbelief . . .***

- Guard against meeting God only on your terms (**Print verse 25**)
  9. Thomas said "*unless....I will in no way...*"
  10. When we challenge God to do it our way, we are moving from grace to legalism--a game which we cannot win
- Be careful not to use your doubt as an excuse (**Print verse 26-27**)
  11. The danger unresolved doubt is may lead to "unbelief"
    1. **ILLUS.: When stubbornness was costly**
  12. No matter how God may work through our doubt, our unbelief is always our choice--not His
  13. Even in our doubt, Jesus always comes to us in his "Peace" (vs. 26) so that HE might lead us from unbelief to faith

***Jesus will lead you on the path of growth by convincing you to say . . .***

- "I can't **COPE**"
  14. **ILLUS.: "Don't look to yourself" C.S. Lewis**
  15. At the point of despair, Thomas had no one else but Jesus
  16. There is nothing wrong with being totally dependent on Jesus—convince self Jesus is right over world's screams
  17. *Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom 8: 39*
- "You are my **LORD**"
  18. For Thomas, it meant humbly eating his sinful words of pride
    1. "*My Lord and my God!*" vs. 28
    2. An attitudinal shift--I don't have it all together, apart from Jesus
  19. God's safety zone when we get there – *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1: 9*

20. **Ills.: God is Out to Pardon**

21. Assured by Jesus' resurrection that the Father accepted His payment for our sin

"Lord, I **BELIEVE!**" (Print and verses 29-31)

22. What made Thomas' doubt constructive— *willing to risk reflection*

23. A prayer of reflection which begin this way: "*Lord, I believe, help my unbelief*" **Mark 9: 22b-24**

24. What made Thomas' moment of doubt beneficial— *when he was sure he went all the way (My Lord and my God)*

25. God wants us to take time out from our raging and "*be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46: 10*

26. Disciplined to go back to "the book" with doubt to be changed from unbending skepticism to unbending conviction

### **Moments of Doubt in our Lives**

Doubt comes to us when we reach the limits of our understanding. When we encounter a sudden, unexpected calamity. When we pray for a certain thing and the exact opposite occurs. When a respected mentor suddenly denies the faith and walks away. When we obey and do what is right and suffer miserably for it. When we take a course at school that seems to make more sense than the faith we have been raised in. When life takes us through twists and turns that make absolutely no sense. These are the kinds of circumstances that often raise unsettling questions. But should we be afraid of those questions? Run from them? No! (*Christ at the Crossroads*, Charles Swindoll Bible study guide, Copyright 1991 by Charles R. Swindoll, Second Addition, May 1992, p. 56)

### **Stubbornness which was costly**

Chuck Yeager, the famed test pilot, was flying an F-86 Sabre over a lake in the Sierras when he decided to buzz a friend's house near the edge of the lake. During a slow roll, he suddenly felt his aileron lock. Says Yeager, "It was a hairy moment, flying about 150 feet off the ground and upside down." A lesser pilot might have panicked with fatal results, but Yeager let off on the G's, pushed up the nose, and sure enough, the aileron unlocked. Climbing to 15,000 feet, where it was safer, Yeager tried the maneuver again. Every time that he rolled, the problem reoccurred. Yeager knew three or four pilots had died under similar circumstances, but to date, investigators were puzzled as to the source of the Sabre's fatal flaw. Yeager went to his superior with a report, and the inspectors went to work. They found that a bolt on the aileron cylinder was installed upside down. Eventually, the culprit was found in a North American plant. He was an older man on the assembly line who ignored instructions about how to insert that bolt, because, by golly, he knew that bolts were supposed to be placed head up, not head down. In a sad commentary, Yeager says that nobody ever told the man how many pilots he had killed." **Citation: Matt Friedeman, *The Accountability Connection* (Victor Books, 1992), story from Chuck Yeager, *Yeager*, (Bantam, 1985)**

### **Don't Look to Yourself**

Look for yourself and you will find in the long run hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find him, and with him everything else thrown in. **Citation: C.S. Lewis, *Preaching Today*.**

## **God is Out to Pardon**

her, he went to some of his friends and asked them if they would be kind enough to contribute something to help pay her rent. They responded, and he got two months' rent. He went to the widow's house that week to deliver the money. Although he knew she was inside, when he knocked he got no answer. He knocked a second time and still no answer. He knocked a third time, still no answer. He knocked a fourth time. Not knowing what else to do, he returned to his business. A couple of days later, he saw her downtown on the sidewalk looking destitute. He walked up to her and said, "Ma'am, some friends of mine and I found out about your situation. We want to help. We got enough money together to give you rent money for two months. I came to your house to give it to you this week, but I knocked several times and got no answer." She took a gasp of breath and put her hand to her face. She said, "Oh, I thought you were the landlord coming to evict me." God is not out to punish. God is out to pardon. **Citation: R. Larry Moyer, "Right Smack in the Middle of Sin," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 148.**

## **John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup>On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>24</sup>Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

<sup>25</sup>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 it."

<sup>26</sup>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!" <sup>27</sup>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."

<sup>28</sup>Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." <sup>30</sup>Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup>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.