

Sunday Sermon: April 28, 2019

Sermon Text: John 20: 19-31

Sermon Theme: The Scriptures are Written

1. That you may believe
2. That you may have life in his name

<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>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

<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.*

Why don't more people read the Bible? More to the point, why don't we read our Bibles more?

The first reason might be pretty simple: The Bible is pretty big. Have you ever tried to read the whole Bible? It takes a long time to read even a small portion of the Bible. I admit, I have studied the Bible a lot. In seminary, we went through many of the books of the Bible, however, I don't know as I have ever read through every word of the Bible.

The second reason might also be clear: there are parts that are challenging to read and hard to understand. In those books and chapters there are many visions, signs, symbols, miracles, people and places that might be difficult to understand. Even the names are hard to pronounce. It can be a daunting task to read some of those portions without someone to ask, "What does this mean?"

The final reason may not be so clear: people don't understand what the purpose of the Bible is. Writers write for many different reasons: to educate, to persuade, or to entertain. Many times it's easy to understand why a book is written just by looking at the cover. *Drywall for Dummies* teaches, *The Downfall of America* persuades, and *Avengers Endgame* entertains.

When you look at the title of the Bible and the books of the Bible, they don't give you the reason why this book is written. There is no clever, eye-catching picture on the front, there is no clever hook in the title that helps.

The purpose of the Bible is only clear when you open the Bible and begin to read it. This purpose is stated no more clearly and simply than in the last chapter and verse of the apostle John's Gospel. <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.** The Bible, God's Word, is written that we may believe in Jesus and have the eternal life through him alone.

It's human nature to be skeptical and to question someone, especially about something that we don't have right in front of us. How many times in school did you check the assignment yourself, even though someone else told you what it was? How many times have you verified travel plans, even though someone said

they were all locked in? How many times have you fact checked what someone else said, even though it seemed true?

At the same time, human beings also have the ability to listen to others, to read the situation, and to be convinced that something is true even without having firsthand knowledge ourselves. Many of us are convinced that there are these beautiful countries all over the world, even though we have not been there personally. We are convinced that events in history happened, not because we were there, but from the accounts and evidence of others.

I'm not sure what kind of person Thomas was, but it seems like he was a skeptical person. Maybe he was gullible and had been tricked before. Maybe he was a fact checker.

The point is, he simply does not believe his closest friends and colleagues, people he has spent the better part of three years with, and what they are saying. **“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my fingers where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”**

That's a pretty big statement isn't it? There might only be one other Bible moment that meets Thomas's level of skepticism. Sarah, Abraham's wife, laughed when God said that they would have a child. And yet, that goes along with human nature. Skepticism is how many people approach the Bible. Prove to me there was a Jesus. Prove to me that Jesus suffered, died and rose again. Maybe we don't struggle with that, but maybe we question and are skeptical about other parts of God's Word. Prove to me that the Bible applies to me. Prove to me that God's definition of sin is the one that is the one that I should live by. Prove to me that the miracles and creation is real and then I will believe it.

Thomas was skeptical of what his friends were saying. He wanted proof. Jesus graciously comes and grants to him the living proof that he needs. He offers his hands and his side to Thomas. John uses this account of this skeptical Thomas to show us why the Bible was written and how we can grow in faith. <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.” 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.**

Our Savior Jesus, does not want us to be skeptical about who he is and what he has done. He has given us the Bible that we hear and read that Word, and through the Holy Spirit believe in him.

Sometimes it's interesting to see all of the archaeological and historical data that has been found that give us glimpses into the Bible. Yet, the Bible is so much more than a finely crafted book of history or facts. The Bible is written so that we could learn about our Savior Jesus.

The Bible has two parts that have one common thread going through them: the Messiah, the Savior. The Old Testament was written to show God's love in promising that Savior and then protecting that promise and keeping his promise until the time it was fulfilled.

The New Testament was written to show God's love in fulfilling that promise to send a Savior, what that Savior has done to save us, and how the Holy Spirit has worked to take that message to us and to many others.

As we look into those Scriptures, we are not just fact-checking. We are seeing and hearing God's love for a world that is lost in sin and unbelief. We are seeing and hearing that God has an answer for sin that is not found in us and what we do, it is found in his Savior.

Our loving God wants his message to be heard and believed, so he has made sure that this message, his Word, has remained secure throughout the many years.

God did not leave his message of salvation to chance. We heard in our second lesson, **“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.”** <sup>21</sup> **For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,** We call this God's Word for a reason. This book was written in a very different way than most. The Bible was not a finely crafted invention of man's mind like Tolkien or CS Lewis.

This book is different because God says so. This book has real promises, real events, real people that God worked in and through to fulfill his plan of salvation. God worked carefully to record these things. Peter continues, **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** God made sure that these things were written and recorded absolutely accurately and truthfully by working through the gifts and talents of these men to inspire them with the thoughts and the words to write.

Why did God do this? God took this care so that unlike Thomas and many others in today's world, we would not be skeptical about his Word. He did this so that we may believe, we may have faith that, Jesus lived for us, suffered and died for us, and rose again for us without having to touch his hands and side.

We have the living and powerful Word of God. Paul tells us, **“Faith comes from the hearing the message.”** And the Holy Spirit works through his Word. Paul writes, **“No one can say, “Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.”**

God has given us his Word for this wonderful purpose that we might believe, but more than that, that we would have life through faith in him.

What do we believe in? Why are here today? Are the promises of Easter just for this life? God wants us to look past this life, because he looks past this life. God is clear in his Word that he wants to save everyone. He told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him. John the Baptist said that Jesus would take away the sins of the world. God sends the Holy Spirit to work through the Word so that we will have faith that Jesus is a Savior and not just a teacher. God cares about something much more than this life, he cares about your eternal life. He sends his Savior so that he would take care of that life to come by forgiving all of sins. This is the life that God wants us to keep our eyes of faith focused on.

There is a great miracle that has occurred. Jesus is risen! Thomas has no more doubt, he has seen with his own eyes. This is an amazing moment and a wonderful thing to happen. Yet, Jesus actually says that those are blessed who have heard the Word, in whom the Holy Spirit has worked faith in Jesus as their Savior.

We will not see heaven until we get there, we aren't go to touch until we get there. But that does not mean that we should be skeptical. Jesus rose and showed himself so that all would know that the promise of heaven was as real as he was. He rose and because he rose we can be sure that the gates of heaven are open. He rose and we can be sure that our Savior is waiting for us to be with him in heaven.

A great miracle happened when Jesus rose from the death, but an equally great miracle will happen when we will also rise because of what Jesus has done. This is what the Bible is simple truth of the Bible. It is what it's about: These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing you may have life in his name.