

## Day Thirty-Six

### Jesus: Real, Relevant, Raw and Radical!

### Hope for a Cynical Heart

**John 20:24-29(NLT)** One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. **25 They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”** **26** Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. **27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”** **28** “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. **29** Then Jesus told him, **“You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”**

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, we see that He had to confront doubt and unbelief. When we read the gospels, we see that Jesus is surrounded by unbelief. We know that many of the religious leaders did not believe in Him. To them, it was a claim of how incredibly smart and insightful they were. “We are smart and calculated, that is why we don’t believe. We are not just going to believe anything or anyone. We are not as gullible as the people are.” Listen to what they say in **John 7:47(NLT)** *“Have you been led astray, too?” the Pharisees mocked.* **48 ‘Is there a single one of us rulers or Pharisees who believes in him? 49 This foolish crowd follows him, but they are ignorant of the law. God’s curse is on them!’** “The people are just a bunch of fools and ignorant, they know nothing. We know the law, we are the teachers of the law and we won’t just fall for anything.”

The root of doubt is always the fear of looking foolish. “We don’t believe that stuff; that’s just for the gullible. We live life purely on what we can see, feel or experience.” Some people make very little room for faith, if at all. We stick with what we can know and prove. Jesus made incredible claims about Himself, about God, and then He was hung on a Roman cross. He died. Then He was alive, seen by many eyewitnesses. We read these accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Epistles. These are written by those who lived it and experienced it. When they experienced it, they did not believe it themselves. They write honestly about their doubts, their fears and unbelief.

Just like them, we all have doubts. We all sometimes struggle to believe. We want to be sure. The crowds believed and some did not believe. Today the mantra is “Science is the answer. If you cannot scientifically prove it, it must not be true.” In Jesus’ day, it was all about signs. **John 6:29-30(NLT)** *“Jesus told them, ‘This is the only work God*

wants from you: **Believe in the one he has sent.'** **30** They answered, **'Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do?'**" "We will believe but you need to produce something so that we can believe."

This resistance to believing in Jesus is not a new thing. Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him. **John 7:2-5(NLT)** *"But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, **3** and Jesus' brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! **4** You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!' **5** For even his brothers didn't believe in him."* Jesus' own brothers had a skepticism about Him. "You need to take your show on the road. If you claim you can do all these things, let people see them!" Jesus receiving mockery from His own family.

Jesus also had those in His own ranks who struggled with believing. Thomas is known for his doubt. He is called "the twin." Today we celebrate twins, but not so much in the ancient world. They were seen as messing up the birth order and inheritance. Twins were not seen as a blessing. I just wonder with what kind of stigma Thomas grew up with. His brother is not mentioned. Just maybe the reason he followed Jesus was because he was the one twin that was not given as much attention as his brother. So, deep within Thomas there is this mistrust that produces a cynical coloring of his world. We see this in his interaction with Jesus. Lazarus is sick and died, so Jesus tells the disciples that Lazarus is sleeping. **John 11:12-17(NLT)** *"The disciples said, 'Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!' **13** They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. **14** So he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. **15** And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him.' **16** Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let's go, too—and die with Jesus.'"*

Nobody was talking about dying, yet Thomas felt the need to mention it to everybody. Everybody knew that the religious leaders were after Jesus, and Thomas wanted to make sure they remembered. At the Last Supper when Jesus explained again to them what was going to take place, I want you to note who is the one that speaks up when Jesus speaks about leaving. **John 14:1-8(NLT)** *"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. **2** There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? **3** When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. **4** And you know the way to where I am going.' **5** 'No, we don't know, Lord,' Thomas said. 'We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?' **6** Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.'" You see doubt is always a reaction to a deeper need or a deeper pain. Doubt becomes a mechanism to protect ourselves. Thomas is not just simply doubting, he is asking a question because he is afraid of being left*

behind. ***“Where are you going Jesus?”*** Thomas was the one who expressed that, even if they had to die when Jesus raised up Lazarus, he was willing. So, he is asking a sincere question. Now fast forward to Jesus’ death and burial. The disciples are together and the only one not present is Thomas. Why? Because in Thomas’ mind, the thing that he was afraid of the most happened. The One he found life in, the One that he experienced things with, that he never thought possible, was gone. All of Thomas’ doubts came roaring back. So, when they told him Jesus is alive, he wanted to make sure. Thomas’ cynical heart needed a loving touch and he got it. The disciples find themselves in the same position they were a week before, together and behind locked doors. The only difference is now Thomas, who was not with them the first time, is with them. They told Thomas that they have seen the Lord, but Thomas refused to believe them. He insists that he will not believe it unless he is able to see and place his fingers and hands into the wounds of Jesus.

Then, just like before, Jesus is standing in the room. He greets everybody and then He addresses Thomas. How surprised must Thomas be, because Jesus repeats everything that Thomas told the others while Jesus was not present. *“Do you want proof Thomas? Here I am! Bring your fingers, bring your hands and see for yourself.”* Then Jesus tells him, “Stop doubting and start believing.” Thomas expresses the only way he could to Jesus, **“My Lord and my God!”** Thomas exclaimed. Thomas shouts this. This was not a quiet confession. This was a loud proclamation. Don’t miss the personal confession, **“My Lord, my God. Jesus you are mine. Jesus You are who You claimed to be. Jesus now I know, You are the Way, Truth and Life.”** All of Thomas’ skepticism, doubt and unbelief crushed by a Loving Savior, who does not condemn, but Who lovingly corrects. I know Thomas is remembered as “doubting Thomas,” but this same Thomas later on laid down his life for Jesus because his doubt got crushed with love. The same with the brothers of Jesus who did not believe, they, in the end, called their brother their Lord; cynical hearts experiencing His perfect love.

Jesus’ love is so beautifully expressed when He comes into the room. Jesus could’ve said, “Well, if Thomas won’t believe you guys, it’s his loss.” But He doesn’t do that. In everything, Jesus demonstrates His love and care for us. Even when we have doubts, He shows His love and care. We all struggle from time to time, we wrestle with doubts in our minds. Jesus has never condemned anyone for asking questions. There is a big difference between refusing to believe because of what it might cost you or just simply asking a question. Thomas, the twin, found in Jesus what He needed the most, hope for a cynical heart. I don’t know your journey and I don’t know what you are struggling with today, but what I do know is that Jesus will not just stop the bleeding in your heart, He will heal your heart.

Even if you don't feel, see or are able to touch, just remember what Jesus told Thomas: *"Then Jesus told him, 'You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.'"*

Let your doubt lead you to the One who can heal your heart.

**Prayer:**

- **Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the root of your doubt.**
- **Thank the Lord for His healing grace in your life.**
- **Pray that Jesus will heal your brokenness and your rejection.**
- **Pray for others who might be struggling in their faith.**