

I suppose I could go around this morning and check, but I doubt I'd have to. I already know what I'd see. Every one of you is sitting fully on the pew. No one is hovering. I don't see anyone straining to keep their full weight off the pew. And why? Why is it that when you sat down you didn't first test the pew to ensure it was safe? Why was it you didn't feel you had to put some weight down but then hold off the rest? Did you have faith in the pew?

Every day millions of people get on highways and drive cars. Think of the trust that involves. Trust in the gas to explode in the right place and power the car rather than blow up the engine. Trust in the wheels that they'll grip the road in turns rather than slip and cause a crash. Trust in the other drivers that they'll follow the rules of the road. The list could go on. Whether its pews, gasoline, or tires trust or faith is always in something. The world follows that rule every single day.

When it comes to matters that really matter suddenly the world thinks faith is blind. What is not seen isn't good enough to have faith in. Most of the world barely understands how engines power their car or how tires grip the road, but trusts those things. With spiritual matters though to have faith means needing scientific data, something visible, something it can touch or see. Jesus changes that for us in the days following his resurrection. Jesus talks faith and makes it clear to us...

**Faith is never blind
The evidence was given
Take God at his Word**

All the Law and Order shows on television couldn't assemble this much evidence. Actual appearances to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb and a group of women after that. At some point on Easter Sunday he appeared to Peter. In the afternoon he walked with two disciples to Emmaus. By Easter Sunday evening a half dozen people had already seen Jesus alive. Still disbelief hung in the air as the disciples gathered in fear. **"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!'"** Even the eyewitnesses there already were didn't settle the issue. But Jesus standing among them with the nail marks and side was enough.

Now more than a dozen eyewitnesses, each with solid evidence, had seen Jesus alive. Hands that touched the body of the risen Christ, eyes that watched him eat something, and ears that heard his comforting statements of peace. It was all too much to believe for one disciple who wasn't there when he should've been. Thomas wasn't in the room for Jesus' first appearance. **"Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 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.'"** He was pretty forceful against the evidence. "I won't ever believe it, never." Thomas was one of the twelve disciples who spent the most time with Jesus. Had walked and talked with him. Heard him say he would suffer, be crucified, and rise again. Thomas had heard the evidence from the others. Doubting Thomas indeed, more like unbelieving Thomas.

Demanding evidence in order to have faith, we're more like Thomas than we want to admit. We want evidence from God to offset the evidence from the world around us that things are out of control. Worse is that God claims to love us yet seemingly lets it happen. Where's the evidence God still loves me? If he loved me I wouldn't have this disease. If he loved me this loved one would still be here. Or when we get caught in a sin, maybe again for the second or third time, or worse, and then we confess and hear forgiveness at the beginning of the service, do we question? Does it maybe cross our minds that we have no real evidence God won't still strike us down? In those moments we want, maybe even demand, that God go out of his way to ensure he won't punish us on the spot for the terrible sins we committed. Like Thomas we just stack sin on top of unbelieving sin.

Same house, same doors locked, same disciples, this time with Thomas. You can hear him, can't you? "This won't work guys. I'll never put my fingers into his side because he's gone." **"Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' 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.'"** Jesus was back. In an amazing demonstration of love Jesus came to show Thomas just what he demanded to see. Jesus made Thomas a believing eyewitness for our benefit. Thank God for Jesus and what he did for Thomas. Thomas received the evidence he needed to believe because Jesus knew you and I wouldn't see him visibly. We have faith in a Jesus we've never seen. But the evidence was given. Faith is never blind. Thomas had faith in Jesus, alive and risen from the dead. He saw the nail marks and the side, the price Jesus paid for you and me. Through the evidence our faith is not blind. It's faith in Jesus, alive and risen from the dead.

If you don't listen, your parents probably get mad at you. If you don't listen, the teacher gets mad at you. If you don't listen, the coach gets mad at you. The disciples didn't listen to Jesus. They waited for physical evidence when they should've taken Jesus at his Word. Wouldn't Jesus be mad with them? **"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."** He wasn't mad. In fact he had come in peace, a peace he himself won with his death and resurrection. That peace also gave them a mission. **"If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."** In order to go and give forgiveness those disciples had to be forgiven. They were in Jesus. They could take Jesus at his word.

We have a lot of reasons to take God at his Word. Our sinful nature refuses. The story of Jesus' resurrection is explained away as fairy tale, the creative mind of someone many years ago playing with the idea that people can grow into something better in this life. Our existence tells us people don't rise from the dead, so it can't happen. This world gives forgiveness, but it's earned and not freely given. If you want to be forgiven you have to do something to earn it from the person. If they want to be forgiven they should earn it from you. And any talk of this world ever ending is nonsense. Everyone can see this world just keeps on going and nothing really ever changes. There won't be one big judgment or one end. There won't be any of those things because we've never seen it. God can't be taken seriously.

Take Jesus at his Word. He promised to come and make peace between God and man, and he did. Peace he won with his victory on the cross. Jesus promised to live again and he did. Jesus lives today after rising and leaving the tomb empty Easter morning. Jesus promised that he would win forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is just what his cross and empty tomb mean. Stop doubting and believe. That's not a command asking you to take a step off a cliff without being able to see some invisible bridge. It's not asking for blind faith. It's a promise from the almighty Lord and Savior.

To live your life by faith means taking God at his Word from his Word. Jesus Christ risen from the dead is the center of your life. Rest securely in his promises of forgiveness. Trust him even though you've never seen him. **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** You don't believe in something blindly. You believe and trust in Jesus Christ. Faith always has an object, and the object of your faith is Jesus Christ. He lives and so will you. Take him at his Word.

When you eat at a restaurant, think about all the people that handle your food before you ever see it. At the doctor think about what could happen if the doctor writes the wrong prescription. Those are blind faith. You trust the food was handled properly and that the doctor was competent to write the prescription correctly. Jesus is much easier to believe in. Faith in him is never blind. Faith in him is based on his resurrection of which you have hundreds of eyewitnesses laying out the evidence. On top of all that, and most importantly you can take Jesus at his Word. He rose. You live in him. Believe it.