

*May we come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and may we, through believing, have life in his name.*

I have often wished that I had more faith. Have you ever felt that way too? Maybe you see other Christians around you whose faith seems so solid and you secretly envy them and think, what about me? Why can't my faith be that strong too? Or maybe you have gone through ups and downs, times when your faith seemed sure, and other times when you thought maybe the whole Christianity thing was just something people made up.

I wonder whether Thomas had those feelings. He'd been spending all his time with Jesus and the disciples for years. He'd experienced God's love. He'd been excited about it. But then Jesus did more and more things that were hard to accept. Jesus started moving toward the crucifixion. Doubts set in. Things were not working out right. Bad things happened to good people. He wondered whether Jesus didn't have the kind of power he'd thought. He wondered whether Jesus was just a great moral teacher, nothing more. He'd stood by hopeless and helpless as everything fell apart. Probably he felt betrayed. He'd watched his hopes be crushed in humiliation. Maybe he felt there was no point in sticking around to see the final agony, to watch his hope bleed away on that cross.

Maybe that lost hope was why he was not with the other disciples on Easter evening. Maybe he was embarrassed by them, the way we are embarrassed when Christians act like fools in the public eye. We don't want to be associated with them, and maybe Thomas didn't either. Maybe Thomas left in an attempt to salvage a tiny bit of pride.

And when he came back, everything had changed. "We have seen the Lord!" they all said. I wonder whether that experience felt to Thomas like the final humiliation. Did Thomas think, "Jesus has given this experience to the other disciples, and not to me! What about me? Why didn't I get that gift?" And then humiliation turned to rejection, as it often does. He would not dare to hope. He would not be hurt again. He would not be

made a fool of again. He would not believe again. Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe. I will not.

But despite it all, Thomas came back to be with the disciples on the Sunday after the Resurrection, low Sunday. He did not run away. He did not find someone else to distract him from that flickering hope that maybe Jesus could do the impossible. Thomas came back to be with the disciples on low Sunday, just as you have. And I suspect the reason he came back was that deep down, underneath the “I will not believe” statement, he wished he had more faith. All Thomas does is show up. God does the rest.

God is humble. God does not wait until we have a great faith before God acts in our lives. Thomas has abandoned him at the crucifixion, and then responded to accounts of the resurrected Jesus with the words, “I will not believe.” God is so humble that God is willing to take whatever wish for more faith we have, and meet us there. God is not afraid to be made a fool of again. God is not afraid to be hurt again. God holds out the hands that we have wounded with our faithlessness, and invites us to touch those wounds. If we wish for more faith, God welcomes us with the simple invitation, “Do not doubt, but believe.” God is so humble he gives us the grace to respond, “My Lord and my God!”