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Meeting the risen Jesus...with Thomas

John 20v24-31

Summary

John records one of the great stories of a 'model' conversion. Thomas doubts in the claims of the disciples that they have seen the risen Lord Jesus. He then believes based upon the evidence presented before him which brings him new life in Christ. The story offers a simple structure of doubt, belief and life.

Doubt

Jesus has died. Thomas was witness to the cruel death that Jesus had suffered, he perhaps watched as they lowered his broken dead body from the cross and carried it away to be buried. When the disciples exclaim 'we have seen the Lord', Thomas reaction is natural and normal – Dead people do not come back to life. He needed evidence. He wanted to see the resurrected body of Jesus and feel the wounds – only then would he believe.

In a world of doubt that seemingly demands empirical evidence for the proof of everything, an unbelieving world struggles to make sense of the resurrected Jesus

Belief

The account of the gentle and firm beckon from Jesus as he presents himself before the doubter. Jesus calls Thomas to 'stop doubting and believe'. We looked at faith in two ways

Faith is reasonable. Thomas believes based upon the evidence before him. It is not a blind leap in the dark. He trusts that Jesus has risen from the dead and this moves him to inevitable worship in proclaiming that Jesus is His Lord and God. Christian faith is built upon firm foundations of historical facts not just a set of ideas. Jesus addresses us in v29: We are required to engage our minds and think rationally through the evidence before us. Faith is trusting on the reasonable and rational evidence presented to us.

Faith is essential. Faith really is a matter of life or death. It is an essential matter and should not be ignored. Ref to John 3v16 and 3v36 help us see the crucial nature of faith in Jesus Christ.

Our greatest danger as Christians is not that we might be out-argued, convinced that we are wrong. Our danger is that we might drift – lose sight of the importance of faith, conviction to keep telling friends about Jesus.

Life

We need the bible, the eye-witness accounts and apostles teaching to keep the risen Lord Jesus front and centre of our faith. V31 is Johns summary verse of his gospel. We need church to keep each other focused on Jesus. We need our home groups to encourage us and keep us accountable to live for Jesus each day. Life is found in Jesus – Life in all its fullness and life everlasting after the grave.

Here are a few questions to start discussion off - as always, feel free to adapt for your group

Questions:

Doubt

- V24-25. Do you think that Thomas was reasonable in his doubting? Why?
- What are the doubts that our friends who don't believe in Jesus have? How much do you think are these barriers to faith?
- What are our doubts as Christians? Where are you susceptible to doubting your faith?
- Discuss how world issues and your personal circumstances affect your faith

Belief

- V28. Have a look at the reaction of Thomas to Jesus. How much does the knowledge of the resurrected Jesus affect our worship of God?
- What is the significance of v29? Share with the group when you first trusted in Jesus – what was it that persuaded you to believe in Him?
- If Christian faith is reasonable, built upon the firm foundations of the resurrected Jesus, what things do we need to keep reminding us?
- But...Christian faith is faith and we must continue. Where are you susceptible to drifting from faith?

Life

- What can we learn from v31 about why John wrote his account of Jesus?
- Go to John 3v16 and 36. Why is Christian faith essential? Spend time praising God for His rescue and new life in Jesus.
- Share with the group some encouragements of how you think your faith as a disciple of Jesus is growing.