

5. N. April 22, 79 A.M. -
(Sun after Easter).

WHAT THOMAS MISSED

John 20:24

Thomas was not with them when Jesus came.

Introduction:

An elderly man could be seen walking to church every Sunday morning. Neighbors knew he was deaf and could not hear a word of the sermon, the music of the choir, or the hymns sung by the congregation. A scoffer asked, why do you spend your Sundays in church when you cannot hear a word. He replied, "I want my neighbors to know which side I am on."

Through schools, industry, and offices have their problems of absenteeism - churches suffer most. On a typical Sunday a church with 200 members will have 100 ^{or less} present. If there are 600 members, there will be less than 300 present. Perhaps churches receive members too laxly - failing to test the depth of the commitment.

One church in Pa. boasted a large membership. A new pastor discovered that many members never darkened the door of the church. One couple said, we are not Christians. Asked why their names appeared on the roll, they explained, a former pastor thought along with the board that it would be lovely if they could have 50 new members join one Easter. By the Saturday before, 48 had been rounded up. A church official begged us to let our names be proposed for membership so that the goal could be reached next Sunday. We told him we were not Christians, but he replied that it didn't matter as long as 50 joined.

*Late Sunday Night 8 P.M. Disagree met Upper Room - Tragic Experience
To miss the 1st worship service - 2 - after the resurrection -*

V. 24
Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus was not with them when Jesus came on that first Christian Sabbath evening. When Jesus showed himself to his disciples. One hopes that he had a good reason for his absence. And that he was not simply indulging in some pleasure somewhere else. Just as some spent their Sabbath's today in various, drab, dull, drowsie ways.

Was it his fault. Or was it simply a misfortune that Thomas was not present at the first meeting on the evening of the day of the resurrection.

Now we cannot really clearly charge him with being absent, with the kind of neglect that church members today neglect the church, because they may not have had any ordinary services in the sanctuary at that time. No such services had been instituted, nor had they any authority over the disciples to prescribe such a meeting.

But it is a strange incident that on the first day of those assembled on the Lord's Day, and those who have assembled since - it has become an established custom with Christians. And of course we are not certain that it was an established custom when Thomas was absent.

Let us think about this situation under two or three heads. First, I would like to discuss the causes as to why he was absent. Second, I would like to talk about some of the blessings he missed by not being present. And I'd like to speak on the things that defeated his doubt. And the final triumph that came through faith.

I. WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CAUSES.

Why was he absent. We know that he missed a good sermon by being absent. What the reason was is the thing that we want to try to discover. Jesus came and

preached - he talked to them about the Old Testament. And I think if Thomas had known this, that this discourse was going to be delivered that night, he would have been there.

Not know that Jesus would be there - (Positive meeting)

This leads me to say this, one never knows when the good things will come. And the only way to be sure of getting in on the spiritual things, is to always be at your post. Be in your place in your church. Always be in the place in your organization. Because absenteeism on an occasion such as this when Jesus met with them certainly was a sin.

The person who stays away from church knowingly or unwittingly, votes against the church. On the first Easter, 10 of the 12 were gathered in the Upper Room, plus other followers. Who were these absentees.

Thomas and Judas. Judas was not present for he had taken his own life - he had committed suicide. He had gone out and hanged himself.

Thomas was not present, and this was inexcusable. Christ had chosen the 12 that they might be with him and Thomas was one of the 12.

Others might be excused but here was a leader of the group. One of the 12. And that is the thing about the church, it is inexcusable when leaders - Sunday School Teachers and Officers of the church fail to give their presence and leadership in the church. Those who occupy the positions of leadership have a special responsibilities. Deacons, Trustees, Elders, Teachers, Youth Advisors, And Committee Members (whether you serve on a committee on the budget, a committee on property - of whatever the committee is) you should not be absent from the Lord's House. Who ever else may - leaders ought to be present, setting an example for the flock. But one of the Masters chosen was not with them when Christ appeared.

So the first cause was there was separation from the disciples. Thomas was absent. I don't think it was because of a lack of love for his Lord. When the other disciples had hesitated to return to Judea because Jesus' life was in jeopardy - there it was that Thomas said, let us go also that we may die with him.

Let us turn and look at that for a moment. John 11:16. When they came to him about the message of Lazarus being dead, Lord behold whom thou lovest is sick. The messengers were left without an answer. Jesus said let us go into Judea again. Some of the disciples thought the Jews would stone him. And Thomas said that he was ready to hazard his life and go along with Jesus. Thomas was one of the outstanding leaders in the group.

I don't think we could charge him with being absent because of a lack of interest in spiritual matters. When Jesus had talked about going, Thomas made this statement - he certainly was no skeptic.

Let us turn to John 14:5, and discover that when Jesus was discussing some matters with them. Thomas said, Lord we know not whether thou goest and how can we know the way. He wanted fuller evidence - he wanted to know for sure. He sought facts. And he wanted to have solid ground on which to place his belief. And his question brought forth the answer of Jesus - I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 14:5,6.

Why was he missing. If we ever need the comradeship of our fellows in Christ, it is when the clouds of doubts gathers over our heads. We can get strength from the companions. We can be re-assured by these experiences.

In this day of ours, when many disciples of the Lord, begin the habit of absenting themselves from the house of God where he might have warm fellowship with Christ, and where Christ is most likely to reveal himself. Heb. 10:25 warns us not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, as so much the more as you see the day approaching.

This is no idle injunction.

Psa. 122:1 - "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." Not only does that record the right attitude, but it points one to the surest springs, and the surest source of gladness. Now this is the thing that Thomas missed. Too often, like Thomas, we give over to the forces which are calculated to strengthen us. And we are left in doubt.

Are you best by doubts. Then hurry to the house of God quickly. Take your place with the people of God. And you will there discover this rich blessing from God.

Now another reason why he might have been absent - is that he was in deep despair over the death of Jesus. He had found it impossible to believe that Jesus would ever rise again.

Thomas had stood by the cross. He had heard the cry of anguish. He had seen the head of the Lord bowed in helplessness and in death. And you can almost hear him saying, "don't talk to me about seeing Jesus again. Jesus is dead. I saw him on the cross."

This despair worked havoc in his soul. And we are prone to yield to it.

Lovey Young Mother
Here all Am - Spent Xmas here - 3 yrs ago - Now have removed - Told got it - I wish you were here - What am I going to do?
The hour is never so dark but that it could be darker. The sorrow we have is never so great, but that it could be greater. And as someone has said, the darker the night the brighter the stars.

There is really no place for despair concerning God and his redemptive purpose. When we look and see the progress even on the external scenes, it seems so slow. And yet the power of darkness appears to be completely victorious.

All that Thomas held dear seemed to go up in despair and that was the reason he was not there.

3 -
V. 25
I think another reason he was not there is because he searched on a human level. I think appraised things by the things he could see - by his physical sight. This is found in his statement, "except I shall see in his hand the print of the nail and put my finger into the print of the nail, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

He brushes aside the experiences of his fellow disciples and puts himself in the center of the picture. He virtually says that your meeting with Jesus means nothing to me, as evidence, it is my eyes which are to be counted upon. It is my hands and mine alone which have the discerning touch capable of identifying Jesus.

Now this is characteristic of unbelief. In empty defiance of the testimony of others, he blindly describes his own terms of accepting Jesus.

Now you will never discover spiritual value by making up your mind in advance as to the method that you are going to follow. As there is a higher path and a more effective path and method to follow.

Now if you are one of those who will say, I do not believe in anything super-natural, I do not believe that there is anything like miracles -- but if you will express unhesitating faith in the reality of the resurrection, then you will be able to see.

Now Thomas did not express this doubt about the raising of Lazarus from the tomb, because he said, let us all go that we may die with him. He showed himself then, a man not prone to look on the dark side of life. But rather one that was expressing the state of his feelings.

I don't think his absence came from the fact that there was an unwillingness to believe. It was the doubt of a sad man and nothing could give Thomas greater delight than to be certified that his Master was indeed risen. This is the thing he was searching for.

Now if we would put this in everyday language, as to why Thomas was missing, his excuse might have been - "I've been hard at work all day. If I walk 1/2 mile to the Upper Room - I shall get no good out of the service. For I am too sleepy."

Somebody wrote a true confession entitled, "Lord, I Lied". "Almighty God as I sit here tonight, surrounded by newspapers, and half watching television, it has just come to me that I have lied to thee and to myself. I said, I was too tired to go to church tonight. That was not true. I would have gone to a baseball game, or any other place I had wanted to go. Being too tired seemed to cover up my indifference. God have mercy on me, I have lied to thee, and to myself. I am not too tired, I am indifferent. Warm my cold heart, oh God, for that is the real reason why I stayed home. Amen."

Perhaps Thomas had planned to go had the evening been pleasant. But rain was threatening. And it was sprinkling already and the streets were still muddy, from a previous shower. His sandals needed repair. The Upper Room was quite a walk. And yet the rain and the mud do not keep people home from other affairs.

What matters pelting rain or snow,
If I have tickets for the show.
But let one drop of rain besmirch
And it's too wet to go to church.

Maybe Thomas reasoned, that service will last over an hour. I just can't spare that long. Besides I can't bear the hot unventilated room. The air conditioning's not working. And I am likely to get a headache. Or when I come out into the evening air, I know that I am going to catch cold.

Yet people spend two or three hours at parties, or places of amusements, where time passes so quickly despite over-crowding, stuffy, smoke filled rooms.

Remorsefully over his own defection, he may have hesitated to go to the worship service. Men whose business dealings have bordered on the shady side, did not relish going to the place where people do business with God.

Though people have always given these excuses for absenting church, the real reason Thomas missed that meeting was because he did not expect Jesus to be there. He didn't believe that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

He told the others, in effect, you go and mourn together if you like. But he won't be present.

A Christian mayor of a large Canadian city told his secretary right after his election, no appointments are to be made for me under any circumstances for Wednesday nights. The secretary looked at him questioningly, the mayor said, I have an appointment with my Lord every Wednesday night. And I never fail to go meet him. I will meet no one else. While mayor of that city, he maintained the practice of regular attendance of mid-week prayer meeting.

The Lord took account of all present, and missed one. Noticing Thomas' absence, he inspired as recorded in John, the Lord misses us when we miss church. When we miss going to the Lord's house to worship. We deprive ourselves of a number of benefits. And Thomas missed several.

II. THE BLESSINGS THOMAS MISSED

Early - Hymns = Wel - 5 And Pray

We talked about the reason why he was not there. And about some of the things he missed by not being there.

1 - First, the presence of Christ. When the rumor of the empty tomb circulated, the disciples came together. And in their meeting behind closed doors, Jesus came and stood in their midst.

ier The phone rang in the office of a Washington church. A voice said, will the President be in church Sunday morning. The minister replied, that I cannot

promise, but I do know that the Lord will be present. And that will be sufficient incentive for a reasonably large attendance.

il When the British queen toured Canada a few years ago, crowds jammed the little church in Niagara Falls one Sunday morning. Spilling out on the lawn all around. The people knew that her majesty would be there.

Our king of kings has promised to be in every service. Even where two or three are gathered in his name. Failure to attend church means forgoing the fellowship of Christ, who promised to be where groups gather in his name.

In the Upper Room, the Lord opened the understanding of those present. He enabled them to understand the Scriptures. As he had done with the Emmaus disciples a few hours earlier concerning the law and the prophets. And doubtless their hearts were burning. But Thomas missed this course of Old Testament interpretation.

The word of God has been ordained the instrument of our sanctification. Jesus said, sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth. John 17:17. Paul wrote, Christ also loved the church, gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. Eph. 5:25-26.

il A teen-ager was making an ocean voyage. And he had learned some Scripture in church. Two men had agreed that one of them would persuade him to take a drink of liquor. And so he came and invited him to take a little glass of wine. I thank you sir, said the boy, but I never drink.

— Never mind, my boy, this will not hurt you - come on and have one.

Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby

"
is not wise," said the boy.

— You need not be deceived by it - I would have you not drink much. Just a little bit and it will do you no harm.

✓ "At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingth like an ~~adder~~ and I certainly think it is wise not to play with an ~~adder~~."

— My fine fellow, said the crafty man, it will give me great pleasure if you will come and have a drink of the best wine with me.

✓ "My Bible says if sinners entice thee, consent ~~th~~ not," said the lad.

— Rather stunned, the man returned to his friend and he asked, "Did you succeed?"
Not at all, grumbled the man. The youngster is so (full of the Bible), I can't do a thing with him.

100
One mother told her boy, always attend both Sunday morning and Sunday evening services. Every time I go, I learn something new. If you stay away, you'll miss some truth.

At church we come to a deeper appreciation of Christ for the sufferings of our sins. And of his resurrection for our justification. In God's House we learn that Jesus paid the penalty on the cross. And that we can be saved from our sins.

1 - Second, he missed the fellowship of believers though there were 10 present. And Thomas missed this fellowship. Admittedly, the church is composed of some not perfect people, but believers for the most part have an interest and concern in Christ.

11 - One Monday morning a youth asked his neighbor and elderly woman who never missed church what the minister spoke on Sunday. I can't remember, admitted the lady. Well, what was his text. I remember it was a good sermon, but I can't recall what it was about. Well, can you tell me what the sermon was about at the evening service, the young man asked. Well no, I can't say that I can. It seems to have slipped my mind. The youth smiled, what is the use of going to church if you can't remember a single word the preacher said. The old lady, looked at him, lad she asked, "will you do me a favor. Will you take this old clothes basket to the well and bring it back full of water." "Come, come, said the young man. I'm not quite as much of a simpleton as that. You know that there wouldn't be a drop of water in that basket when I got back. It was the old lady's turn to smile - perhaps, you are right. But the basket would be a bit cleaner."

Apart from the sermon and fellowship with God's saints, it would have a healthy effect upon your life.

11 - A traveler once was going along through Indiana and he noticed the stone church. There was a red neon sign flashing, "one hour cleaning". A closer look disclosed that he had been blinded by the sun glare and the neon sign belonged to a wooden store next to the sanctuary. Does not that have some association with God's people. An hour of worship helps to remove some spots and stains.

He missed joy and peace. The disciples came to this meeting gloomy. Mourning the death of Christ and the report that had been given to them that he was not in the tomb. How often do people come to church who are down in the dumps and are revived when they get a new vision of Christ's love. Jesus pronounces his benediction to these - peace be unto you. And Thomas missed both the peace and the joy. Church attendance that day would have given him both peace and joy.

V. 21 3 - Third, he missed the commission of Christ. At this meeting which Thomas missed, the Lord stated, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. He commissioned them to visit and to witness. "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you." They had a job to do.

4 - Missed The Power Need for Conquest - Review The H. S.

Every Christian is to confess Christ before men. In the broadest sense of the word, we are all to be missionaries, of the Good News, in the circles of our relatives and friends. And people who neglect to meet Christ in worship will have no message to tell others.

*V. 19 50 Missed The Comforting Words of Jesus - "Peace Be with you!"
We All are tired - Tension - He will give But we must Come!*

III. THE DEFEAT OF DOUBT.

V. 26

Now the doubts of Thomas was soon removed - but how.

V. 26 1st First, he put himself in a position to learn the truth. It took place after 8 days - after the disciples were within and Thomas came and gathered with them the next Lord's Day. This gives us hope for him. He did isolate himself from the other disciples, at first, and he had announced the terms on which he would believe.

And yet underneath, there was a hunger in his heart. And he put himself in a position that those doubts could be dealt with.

If you want to be liberated from your doubts, then you must take this first step. Put yourself in the best possible position to learn the truth. Namely, in the company of those who know it. By experience. This Thomas did. Have you, or will you.

2 — Second, the condescention of Jesus. This is the most wondrous fact. Here they were in the place, and Jesus comes to meet with them again. Still he comes down to us. And this he did with Thomas. Hear, him say Thomas. "Reach hither thy finger and thy hands, see my hands and reach hither my hand and entrust it in my side. In this, Christ administered the most effective rebuke while he revealed the right way of dealing with doubt.

How empty our hasty words are, when they come into the face of Jesus. How often hasty words are spoken. And when they are repeated to people when they are calm and cool, they are quite ashamed of the wild and unearthly words that they have said.

Now did Thomas avail himself of the offer, for believing the reality of the Lord's resurrection. Did he actually put his finger and hand into the nail and sphere wounds.

Opinions differ on this point but we think probability is on the side that in the narrative, there seems no room for the process of this investigation - Thomas answers the proposal of Jesus by what appears to be an immediate profession

of faith.

We would expect results of a deliberate inquiry. And there was a sudden change of feeling because he had seen the wounds shown. Not because he touched them and examined them with his hands. But there was a feeling in his heart.

Thomas could have easily reached out and taken the hand of Jesus, touched it, and felt of it. Very warmly, as a friend. Whereas before, he had said, Jesus risen - the thing is impossible. And there's the end of it. And I won't believe except thy do so and so. But 8 days have gone by and he has listened to the testimony of others. Will Thomas insist upon such a test. No, no, I think his doubts vanished at the very sight of Jesus. Even before Jesus laid bare his wounds. I think Thomas was virtuely believing and after he had seen the ugly wounds, and heard the generous words of Jesus, he is ashamed of his reckless speech.

V. 28 The (triumphant shout) voiced by Thomas. V. 28. My Lord, and my God. Here are two solid pillars of Christianity. Namely the Lordship of Jesus and the deity of Christ. He is Lord of all - or he is not Lord at all. To know him as Lord is to make him and to own him as Master. He controls for the doing of his will. This is the fullest and the firmest belief. Nothing is so firmly believed as Thomas now. As he lifts his eyes and his hands to Heaven as it were and exclaimed - My Lord and My God. It is a fact. The crucified Jesus is restored to life again.

Now this is no mere expression of surprise. But it is an appropriate confession of his faith. The first part of it he addresses to Jesus - he recognizes him, that who was dead is now alive. My Lord. My beloved Master. It is even he. And this was the very one he had enjoyed the blessed fellowship

with, before he had been crucified.

The second part he acknowledges and addresses Christ's divinity. If not for the first time, he put it all together. From the fact, he rises, my Lord risen, yea and therefore my God. For he is divine. Over whom death hath no power. And so this bring additional certainty. Christ - if Christ be God, then death could have no power over him. And this is an affirmation as he starts on a low platform and reaches a high one.

V.29 " The concluding thing has to do with the Beatitude - V. 29. Jesus said, blessed are they that have not seen and yet believed. Blessed are those who believe without seeing. Since then, no one has seen and no one can believe because he has seen, as Thomas. He saw, and we might be able to do without seeing. We must believe their testimony. For us to believe without seeing is to be satisfied with something less, than an absolute demonstration like Thomas had.

That is where faith is most needed. If faith were possible for only those who see, then belief in Christianity could not extend beyond the age of Thomas. And the other disciples. Those who do believe enjoy a blessedness all there own. And they escape the torment of uncertainty. The joy that they will live again. That those who have died will live again. This is the beatitude that Jesus pronounced upon them.

Jesus would not have us envy those who had the opportunity of seeing. And who believe only after they saw. We, who live so far from the events, are apt to imagine that we are placed at a great disadvantage, as compared with the disciples of Jesus. That our faith may be more difficult than theirs. But this is precious to our heart. The fact that we are able to believe without seeing.

We need to reach the full blessedness of this faith. The disciples were happy men because they had seen and talked with the risen Lord. They were happy with this insight.

Now he gives us the knowledge that is attainable to us. That the blessedness of our faith will raise above all doubts, if we are faithful, we may rise above and rise up from humble things. We may begin in our weakness and conclude in unspeakable joy full of glory. We have not seen him with the physical eye nor touched him with the physical hand, but with the eye of faith - faith is our sight. And it sees the invisible. The great blessing of faith.

Prince William of Orange led his people in a War that lasted 37 yrs -
King William of Spain offered him fabulous sums of money &
offered to put him in line for the Spanish Throne!

But Prince William sent back this message which is embalmed
in the hearts of the Dutch people & which
illuminates the pages of History.

"Not for wife, nor children, nor lands, nor life
will I mix in my cup one drop of the poison of treason -
for his country be loved -

Let us, in wisdom, courage show that we care for Christ,
his Church -