

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 3rd July 2022

Thomas the Apostle

The telephone service has been prepared by Revd Sue Linford and is available on 01308 293062

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Jesus is Lord
Creation's voice proclaims it
For by His power each tree and flower
Was planned and made
Jesus is Lord
The universe declares it
Sun moon and stars in heaven cry
Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord

Praise Him with hallelujahs

For Jesus is Lord

2. Jesus is Lord
Yet from His throne eternal
In flesh He came to die in pain

Hymn *Jesus is Lord, creation's voice proclaims it.*

On Calv'ry's tree
Jesus is Lord
From Him all life proceeding
Yet gave His life a ransom
Thus setting us free

Jesus is Lord

3. Jesus is Lord
O'er sin the mighty conqueror
From death He rose
And all His foes shall own His Name
Jesus is Lord
God sent His Holy Spirit
To show by works of power
That Jesus Is Lord

Jesus is Lord

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Today we focus on the apostle who has become known as Doubting Thomas. We are sometimes rather like Thomas, because we, too, can be troubled by doubts. Let us turn to the risen Lord, and ask him to dispel our doubts as he dispelled the doubts of Thomas

Risen Lord, you strengthen our faith by your presence among us.

Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

You strengthen our faith by your steadfast love for us.

Christ, have mercy, **Christ, have mercy.**

You strengthen our faith through our membership of the believing community.

Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect (special prayer for today)

Almighty and eternal God, who, for the firmer foundation of our faith, allowed your holy apostle Thomas to doubt the resurrection of your Son until word and sight convinced him: grant to us, who have not seen, that we may believe and so confess Christ as our Lord and our God; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

READING: John 20:24-29

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, '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.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

REFLECTION

The story of 'Doubting Thomas' is found only in John's Gospel, and the story addresses a problem felt by those for whom he was writing, namely how is it possible to believe in the risen Lord if one has not seen him? 'Unless I see, unless I touch, I will not believe' so said Thomas. To us nowadays that may sound reasonable and logical. In our technological society it is the norm to doubt everything that can't be measured or rationally explained. Of course, reason is a good guide, but there are aspects of life that cannot be explained by purely rational means. Science is not everything.

Thomas wanted to base his faith totally on fact. But fact can only take us so far. Faith goes beyond what we can see and what we know; the belief that what we see is not all there is. To adopt Thomas' approach would be to condemn ourselves to live in a purely material world. There is a facet of reality which eludes the senses, but which is nevertheless absolutely real. The visible world is only part of something much greater which includes invisible realities. As Saint-Exupery wrote in 'Le Petit Prince' 'What is essential is invisible to the eye.'

Rationalists approach God and religion as something that can be understood and explained; for mystics God is mysterious, cannot be explained or understood but only experienced. Faith takes us where our senses cannot go. Without faith we remain firmly fixed to the ground, but faith sets our soul soaring.

Nevertheless, we can sympathise with Thomas as he was only voicing the human desire for certainty. And there is no absolute certainty about God and spiritual realities, if there were, then faith would not be necessary. Blaise Pascal wrote, 'In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don't.' Jesus said to Thomas, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.' And this is an encouragement to us in our faith who are asked to believe without being able to see or touch the risen Jesus.

PRAYERS

In the knowledge that God is here present with us, let us pray.

Father, we thank you for the gifts of sight and insight, and ask you to be there in all our looking. Help us always to see with eyes of faith, love and honesty.

Open our eyes: **to see things your way, Lord.**

We pray for all who are called to lay or ordained ministry, that they may be given all the support and strength that they need to do your work.

Open our eyes: **to see things your way, Lord.**

We pray for the gifts of discernment and integrity among all those who govern, advise and lead. Clear away all self-centred ambition to free our leaders to serve.

Open our eyes: **to see things your way, Lord.**

Whenever we are with our family and friends, neighbours and colleagues, be there in our communication, and remind us of our calling to love one another.

Open our eyes: **to see things your way, Lord.**

We call to mind those whose eyes are wet with tears or tense with pain. Help them to sense your reassuring love which can bring us through the darkest of valleys.

Open our eyes: **to see things your way, Lord.**

Jesus is the first fruit of the new and eternal life we are promised in you. We commend to your love those who have recently walked through death into that promise, and thank you for the privilege of knowing them here on earth.

Open our eyes: **to see things your way, Lord.**

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Prayers by Susan Sayers

Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen**

Hymn To God be the glory

1. To God be the glory great things He has done
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin
And opened the life gate that all may go in

Praise the Lord praise the Lord

Let the earth hear His voice

Praise the Lord praise the Lord

Let the people rejoice

O come to the Father through Jesus the Son

And give Him the glory great things He has done

2. O perfect redemption the purchase of blood

To every believer the promise of God

The vilest offender who truly believes

That moment from Jesus a pardon receives

Praise the Lord praise the Lord

Let the earth hear His voice

Praise the Lord praise the Lord

Let the people rejoice

O come to the Father through Jesus the Son

And give Him the glory great things He has done

3. Great things He has taught us

Great things He has done

And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son

But purer and higher and greater will be

Our wonder our transport when Jesus we see

Praise the Lord ...

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*We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us
now*

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

We pray God's blessing on each other

By his holy wounds may Christ our Lord guard you and keep you.

May his wounds help you to find healing for your own wounds.

And may your faith give you the strength to bear whatever the world may throw at you.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and those whom you love and pray for, this day and for evermore. **Amen**