

Sermon Notes - April 8, 2018 "Thomas Sunday"

Sermon Focus: Doubt, Misunderstanding and Faith, John 20

All Readings http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Easter/BEaster2_RCL.html

St. Thomas helps us understand misunderstandings in John

I know that I am pushing a stone uphill, but I would love for you to imagine Thomas as more than a cartoon cut-out of doubt. Thomas represents *misunderstanding as a means to faith*. A primary point for the Gospel of John is that we do **not** heroically overcome doubt with faith. But in relationship with Jesus, misunderstandings are cleared up and **that** leads to faith.

John uses the literary device of misunderstanding all the time. Many of the people Jesus encounters don't "get it" until a reboot. When they finally understand, they follow Jesus. After the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene and Thomas are the capstone stories of misunderstanding moved to faith. Thomas is the open door for us. We can seek Jesus with our own mixed bag of misunderstandings, and that is our starting point for sustainable faith that God gives us.

Thomas is the last person in the Gospel of John blessed with belief (excluding Peter's shoreline fish bake, which has a different point). Thomas is the connection point for us to keep faith alive by going from misunderstanding to belief. We don't have to smack Thomas around so much. We also don't have to lift him up as some sort of skeptics' hero. He is just guy who needs something more from God.

Shorthand for John's storytelling around misunderstanding – 1. Jesus speaks/acts truth, 2. the person says "huh?" 3. The person says something dumb 4. Jesus sooner or later clears things up. 5. They get it 6. They follow/worship him.

John 2 - Some don't "get it" until after Easter

19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." 20 They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John 3 and 19 - Nicodemus doesn't get it until Jesus' death

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." 4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

John 19 Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. 39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds 40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen.

John 4 - Samaritan woman gets it quickly after being a little dense.

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." 11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." ... 42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

John 4 (different verses) - The disciples are super dense, all the time.

31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." 33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" 34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

John 20 - Why St. Thomas is better than doubt

When we get to John 20, Mary Magdalene and Thomas are the grand finale of misunderstanding. We have been primed by all the other stories, so that we can be OK with our own misunderstandings of God's love. We are loved through our misunderstandings to move into believing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing we may have life in God's name (John 20:30). So I really like St. Thomas, but who is this doubting Thomas you keep talking about? I don't understand.

Pastor Todd