

Text: John 20:24-31

Meaning: Thomas missed Jesus and doubted as a result

Big Idea: You can wander in doubt simply by missing Jesus

Objective: I want the hearers to have a strong faith

Theme: How do you miss Jesus?

MISSING JESUS

HARRISON HIDING ILLUSTRATION

When our children were younger, one day Chrystal was at home with them all and our son Harrison decided he would play a little joke on us and he decided to hide from his mother. He had been playing just fine and Chrystal knew exactly where he was, then he decided to very quietly slip under a bed and hide. Needless to say when Chrystal began to call for him and couldn't find him things got stressful very quick. Chrystal went through the entire house. She went outside. She called our next door neighbors. This went on for a considerable amount of time. It's actually kind of impressive that he was able to stay quiet that long under that bed! It went so long that eventually one of our neighbors called the police thinking we may need to enlist their help at this point. About the time a policeman showed up at our door, out pops Harrison, with a big smile on his face like "Boy, I got you mom!". As he saw that policeman and the terror on Chrystal's face he realized just what he had done. I'm surprised he is alive today after pulling a stunt like that!

As a parent, how do you lose a child? It's easy. Chrystal and I can get preoccupied cleaning the house or doing some yardwork or talking on the phone, and the next thing you know that child who was playing just in the next room has wandered into our backyard somewhere.

It encourages me to know that even Mary and Joseph lost Jesus one time. Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem to return home, but left Jesus at the Temple.

Church, just like Mary and Joseph, we forget Jesus all the time don't we? It is so easy to get distracted by life, overwhelmed by circumstances, disappointed by others, discouraged by hardship, and just leave Jesus behind.

YOU CAN LIVE A GOOD LIFE, DO SOME GOOD THINGS, AND STILL MISS JESUS – AND THEREFORE MISS HEAVEN.

Thomas was a disciple of Jesus, walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, even did ministry with Jesus, but missed his resurrection appearing. How does that happen?

READ John 20:24-31

Thomas is one of the lesser known disciples in the church. The one thing Thomas that is most notable about Thomas is that he doubted Christ's resurrection. As a result he is referred to as DOUBTING THOMAS. Today's passage is where we get this designation, which is a little unfair because we all have seasons of doubt. Thomas went on to serve the Lord faithfully and help spread the good news of the gospel to the nations.

There is historical evidence that Thomas journeyed outside the Roman Empire to preach the gospel. In fact, there are many churches in the Middle East and Southern Asia that claim they were started by the Apostle Thomas. I have been to the tomb of Thomas where he was martyred for the faith in Chennai, India located near the Bay of Bengal.

So, Thomas had doubts, but he responded in faith when those doubts were addressed by the Lord.

Thomas's response brings the Gospel full circle from the Prologue, where he emphatically said that the "Word was God" (1:1). Now we have a book end personal confession, "My Lord and my God", which

is a picture of the only appropriate way to respond to the preponderance of evidence listed in the gospel. In this Gospel the evangelist has proclaimed that:

Jesus was active in creation (1:2)
Jesus is the Word who became flesh (1:14)
Jesus is the sin-bearing Lamb of God (1:29, 36)
Jesus is the Messiah (1:41; 4:25–26)
the Son of God and the King of Israel (1:48)
the new Temple (2:19–21)
The new Moses (3:14)
the Savior of the World (3; 4:42)
the agent of God and the fulfillment of Scripture (5:30, 39)
the expected prophet (6:14)
the Great “I am” (6:35, etc.)
the supplier of living water (7:38)
the Son of Man (9:35)
the consecrated/Holy one (10:36)
the glorified one (13:31)
the preparer of our destiny, the who never abandons us (14:2, 18)
the vine from which we draw our very life (15:5–7)
the sender of the Holy Spirit (15:26; 16)
the bearer of truth (18:37),
the crucified King (19:15)
the risen Lord (20:20)
FINALLY HERE HE IS MY LORD AND MY GOD (20:26).

The first time Thomas wasn't there, but thank God he was in the room the second time! But still, for me, Thomas's situation begs the question, HOW DO YOU MISS JESUS?

How can you be a disciple, walk with Jesus, talk with Jesus, do ministry with Jesus, and still miss his resurrection appearing?

1. **WRONG PLACE**

Scripture says Thomas was not present when Christ originally appeared to the disciples on that resurrection Sunday. The Bible doesn't give us any indication as to why he wasn't there. Maybe he was disillusioned by the traumatic events that just unfolded. Maybe he felt guilty for running away during it all. Maybe one of the other disciples offended him by something he said. Maybe he had lost interest thinking that His Lord was now gone and the movement was over. Scripture doesn't say, but for whatever reason he skipped church the Sunday when Jesus showed up.

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them

Church, God is omnipresent. So, what does Jesus mean by where two or three are gathered in my name I am there? Jesus manifests himself among his people in a supernatural way when we gather to exalt His name and receive from His Word.

DON'T BE ABSENT WHEN AND WHERE THE LORD IS PRESENT.

How dare we say that God is absent from our lives when we are absent from worship. The point is not attendance, it's attention. One of the main reasons some people are missing Jesus in their life is simply because they don't gather with the church to call upon His name.

Cell phone works at home

At our house we don't have very good cell phone service, so we have to turn on wifi calling on our phones so that we can send messages and make calls. So, as long as we are in the house we make the connection. The same is true for faith – AS LONG AS YOU ARE IN GOD'S HOUSE YOU'LL MAKE THE CONNECTION WITH HIM.

For whatever reason Thomas chose to ISOLATE HIMSELF from the group. The Christian life cannot be lived in ISOLATION. Isolation and solitude, disconnection from other Christians will lead to disconnection from Christ.

If you're not connecting with God it may simply be because you're not consistently in God's house and with God's people.

2. WRONG PERSON

4 times in one verse Thomas refers to himself and his own perception of things.

We like to pick on Peter for denying Jesus, and so he did. But what about Thomas? He not only denies Jesus here, but he also denies his friends. This is double selfishness if you will.

CULTURE SAYS – DON'T LISTEN TO NOBODY MAN. JUST BE YOU. JUST DO YOU. WHO CARES WHAT OTHERS THINK! JUST BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.

The major problem with that is SELF-PERCEPTION IS ALMOST ALWAYS FALSE PERCEPTION. If you really want to know the truth about yourself ask those closest to you and you'll get the truth.

IT IS ONLY WHEN WE DENY OURSELVES THAT WE CAN RECEIVE CHRIST. THE BUCKET HAS TO BE EMPTIED BEFORE IT CAN BE FILLED. The problem is that many people are just too FULL OF THEMSELVES to be FULL OF THE SPIRIT. You can't be full of both!

D.L. Moody

God sends no one away empty - except the man who is full of himself

A man who won't listen to his friends is way too full of himself. It's been said the smallest package in the world is a man all wrapped up in himself.

ARTICLE - "How To Be Miserable."

"Think about yourself. Talk about yourself. Use "I" as often as possible. Listen greedily to what people say about you. Expect to be appreciated. Be suspicious. Be jealous and envious. Be sensitive to slights. Never forgive a criticism. Trust nobody but yourself. Insist on consideration and respect. Demand agreement with your own views on everything. Sulk if people are not grateful to you for favors shown them. Never forget a service you have rendered. Shirk your duties if you can. Do as little as possible for others."

Matthew 16:25

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Scripture says – the greatest among you will be your servant, it is more blessed to give than receive, do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourself.

J.O.Y. – Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last

If life is all about YOU it can't be ALL ABOUT JESUS

3. WRONG PERSPECTIVE

Seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing. Some say they need to see it to believe it. The truth is if they saw it they'd deny it.

Some say they are just realists. What does that mean anyway? If it doesn't match your preconceived notions, you won't believe it? Realism is just another form of pride in a lot of cases.

Hebrews 11:1, 6

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.... And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Receiving eternal life is not a matter of FEELING, it is a matter of WILLING.

It is a conscious decision of my will to trust in Christ. If you're waiting on a feeling to follow Jesus you'll never make it.

Takeaway Statements:

BE WHERE JESUS IS

Jesus told Mary and Joseph, "don't you know I'd be in my Father's House?" Jesus is always at the house of God.

What was it that changed the skeptic from non-believing to believing in this passage – IT WAS THE GRACIOUS PRESENCE OF CHRIST. I TRULY BELIEVE IT WAS THE GENTLE WAY THAT JESUS ADDRESSED THOMAS'S DOUBTS.

It is the love of God that draws us to repentance. Beloved, today know that Jesus does not condemn us or cast us aside when we have doubts and questions. Today look at His hands. Look at His side. Consider the price He paid for you on the cross, because it was you and I that should have been nailed there. Consider how deep the Father's love is for you and trust Him.

WHERE JESUS IS THERE IS GRACE!

BE WITH THOSE WHO LOVE JESUS

The faith of others inspires and builds our faith. We were created for community and saved for service to one another

BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS

Thomas was disillusioned and hurting over the traumatic experiences he had gone through over the past few weeks. As a result he erroneously married his trauma to what he thought was true about God.

BE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT

The Bible is not the totality of all God has done or all He will do in this world. It is infallible and inerrant and completely authoritative for life and faith, but it is not the exhaustive resource of all work that God has done or will do through the ages.

The moment you say, "Well, I have to see it for myself." Or "that goes against everything I believe to be true." Maybe my belief or my preconceived notions are wrong.

What we have written in God's word serves as the historical and theological evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.