

Holy Week 2025

"From Doubt to Faith"

I want to read God's Word to you on this Easter day. From the Gospel of John 20:19-31. A portion of the account of the resurrection and the disciples hearing of it. This is God's word.

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,^[a] Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin,^[a] was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Let's pray one more time. Lord, give us, we pray ears to hear responsive, warm, tender hearts, honest minds. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Please be seated.

I am more or less from the state of Missouri, at least for the last number of years. That's where I've lived most of the time. And Missouri has a motto. The motto is we are the show me state. We will not be duped. We will not be fooled. Show me. Well, if Thomas were alive today, he would want to live in Missouri because he was in a show me state of mind.

Now skepticism is in vogue or has been in vogue. Maybe it's evaporating a little bit at this moment in our culture. And skeptics think they're virtuous because they see what everybody's up to. Someone has power or authority or claims some role or other. They say, what's in it for you? What are you gaining out of this? They like to poke holes in any argument or any case.

They want to see if they can stick their finger through that hole in your shirt, or maybe pull on that thread on your sweater and see if the whole thing might possibly unravel. They feel good about that. And of course, it's good not to be duped. But it's also better to have convictions, to have a life, to have principles upon which we base our life, not simply to criticize other people in other ways.

So all we ask with Thomas is the gospel true? Can we believe the report that he is alive, that he is risen? Now Thomas, like the other disciples, were glad they had found Jesus, a man they could believe in. They say later on that we had hoped he was the one after his death. We had hoped he was the one who would deliver Israel.

And there were reasons for their hope. Jesus touched lepers and healed them. He touched the eyes of the blind and the tongues of the mute and healed them. And crowds came not diluted by tales of psychosomatic recovery. But people really changed, physically changed. Tens of thousands of people came to him, and if they forgot to bring enough food, he would sometimes feed them.

They taught them. He was wildly popular among the people, but the authorities were dubious. They said, who's his daddy? Who trained him? Where did you go to school? And by the way, he doesn't follow our rules. So said the religious leader. She, in their mind, violated the Sabbath by walking around and teaching and healing people on the Sabbath day.

And the secular authorities, the Romans were afraid of his popularity. They know that there were many rebels and many insurrectionists trying to throw off the yoke of Rome. And Jesus said things like, the kingdom of God has arrived. What does that mean? What does he mean by that? Does he mean the kingdom of Rome is going to disappear?

He seems dangerous to us. Maybe. Well, the authorities having power put him on trial and eventually murdered him judicially under the cover of law. They knew it was false. They. They finally condemned him for sedition. They knew that he didn't claim to be a physical rebel. The disciples were devastated. They huddled together, hopes crushed, hiding, wondering what might happen to them because they were on his side.

Some women were more bold. Jesus had been crucified on the Passover day, and so the process of burying him had not gone fully to the end. It hadn't been proper. So they took spices to anoint his body, going to the tomb, wondering, of course, how they would get to his body because his body was sealed by a very, very large stone and guarded by Romans.

Mary Magdalene was the leader, according to John chapter 20. And when she got there, she found the tomb empty. She drew a conclusion. They've taken his body. They've moved his body. She came upon Jesus, not knowing who it was, later on, and said, tell me where you put him. She also had a vision of angels, and she also saw him and knew who he was.

Later on, after a little pause, and so she told the disciples, and Peter and John went running. Now eyewitnesses have a way of putting in little details that make us sure that events really happen. So here's a little detail Peter and John running on the first day of the week. To us we say Sunday, but to them it's Monday.

It's the first day of work. So they're running early in the morning through the streets, streets clogged streets full of people working and selling their dodging their fellow citizens. And John can't resist saying, you know, I got there first.

I have more foot speed than Peter does. No, he wasn't boasting. He was saying that when he got there, he had to pause because he couldn't understand what he saw. He paused at the edge of the tomb and gazed in, wondering the meaning of what he perceived. And then Peter came chugging up. Maybe a burly fellow, maybe just slow foot, maybe a little bit older.

And instead of pausing, he just raced right in, and they saw the same thing. They saw burial claws over here, and they saw a headpiece because they wrapped the head. They saw a headpiece twirled up intact over there. And they thought, what happened? Who moves the body after unwrapping it? Who wants to touch dead skin? Who wants what kind of a person would unwrap a dead body and then hauled away somewhere?

And by the way, if someone did unwrap the body, how on earth is the head piece intact?

And then it hit them. He said he was going to die, and he said he would rise in the third day. They didn't move him. He's gone. He moved himself. The father moved them. The father raised him from the dead. That accounts for the evidence. Accounts for what we see in front of us. I want to make sure we understand something here.

The disciples believed what all Jews believe. And that is that after death, the spirit continues to live. After we die, our spirit goes to be with the Lord if we have trusted him. They believe that they are. They are not saying that His spirit is alive. They're saying his body is alive in the flesh. Fists and feet had hair and side in the flesh.

Jesus isn't just alive. However, the Bible also says he had to rise. It said the death could not hold him. He had to die. He had to rise. It could not be otherwise. They remember. And as later in the day, Mary Magdalene sees Jesus face to face. Not just he's gone, but I've seen him. I've talked to him.

She runs to the disciples. The disciples know the tomb is empty. They've got an idea, but they haven't seen Jesus yet. And she tells them, I've seen the Lord. And then Jesus comes a little later and he talks to ten of the disciples. Now, I know you know there are 12 disciples. Why 1010? Because Judas, who betrayed Jesus, did not know how to handle his grief.

Instead of repenting and taking it to the Lord and asking for forgiveness and restoration, he despaired. He turned inward. He took his life and Thomas was gone. We don't know why he wasn't there. He was out getting some food. He was pondering things. He was looking at the stars. He was praying. We don't know. Thomas is if we believed in patron saints, Thomas would be the patron saint of everybody who goes to the stadium and misses the play of the day because they went to get nachos.

Hey, while you were getting nachos, there was a 97 yard punt return. Hey, hey, while you're getting nachos, there was a single, another single walk and then a grand slam. It went 480ft. Just thought you'd like to know.

Thomas. He came back. And they said, we've seen the Lord. We've seen the Lord. And he said, I don't believe you. He said, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into his hands. Unless I stick my hand, my fist into the hole in his side. John says earlier that when Jesus breathed his last, the soldiers whose job was to make sure somebody who's supposed to be dead is really dead, stuck a spear in his side to make sure he's dead.

He was dead. And there's a whole and whether that whole healed up quickly or slowly or later at that moment, the the mark of the hole, the flesh was still open. Renaissance artist named Caravaggio one of the greatest artists of all time. He painted canvases that are more than half as big as this space right here. Painted a picture of Peter poised.

Sorry, Thomas. Peter poised, ready to put his finger into the hole, the mark in Jesus hands. And you see Jesus side open as if an invitation to stick that fist in there. The way Jesus said, and we don't know from the from the picture whether he's going to do it or not. But Jesus says this I offer to you a real resurrection.

Physical continuity between what you knew and what you see today. Christians have always confessed this was a poem written for Easter, about 40 or 50 years ago. And among other things, it says this. It says, make no mistake, if he rose at all, it was his body. If the cell's dissolution did not reverse, the church will fall. It was not as the flowers each soft spring recurrent.

It was not as his spirit in the mouths and funneled eyes of the 11 apostles. It was as his flesh ours. Jesus is resurrected. Thomas doesn't want a dream or a hope or a hallucination. He wants a Jesus that does things like go fishing and catch fish and cook fish and eat breakfast. As John chapter 21 tells us, real events, literal events, physical events.

That's what we want, Thomas says. If there's not a physical resurrection, there's no resurrection at all. There's no hope whatsoever. And I want to see it with my eyes. That's what he tells his friends. Now, this is an act of rebellion or unbelief. You know, in John chapter four, Jesus heals somebody. And some people say, oh, now we believe in you.

And Jesus said, you know, it's a flawed and unbelieving generation that demands to see signs and hear one of his own disciples is demanding to see signs. We call him Doubting Thomas. But honestly, we should probably call him unbelieving Thomas. In the original language. It's as sharp as can be if I don't.

If I don't see and touch, I will never believe. He states his doubts, and it's good because sometimes we have doubts. Believers have doubts. And I know we have guests here today who are checking it out, wondering if it's true. So Thomas states our doubts for us, and a week later, Jesus appears. Eight days later, he appears. All this time, Thomas, dogged, pessimistic but loyal, has been hanging out with his friends, saying he doesn't believe it for a week.

It kind of fits the man. Earlier, Jesus said, I'm going to Jerusalem. And Thomas said, hey, let's all go to Jerusalem and die with him. That's Thomas, a loyal pessimist. He's been hanging around and all of a sudden Jesus comes and he says, peace be with you. And he might as well say, Thomas, I've been listening. Heard what you said.

You want to put your finger into the print in my hands. Here's my hand. You want to put your whole hand into my side? By all means. A Caravaggio was brilliant. He paints the painting with Jesus hand here. And the finger of Thomas here. We don't know. We don't know if he did it or not. He didn't have to.

But we do know this when he meets Jesus, the brash braggadocio of unbelief disappears. And he says, my Lord and my God. Now we have to remember that people use the name Lord in vain a great deal in our country. They say, Lord did not mean it, and they say God, and they don't mean it. And they say Jesus.

And Jesus is very far from their minds.

But when Thomas says, my Lord and my God, he means it. He means you are Lord and you're my Lord. He means you are God and you are my God. He means I believe I give up right now. I give up my unbelief which we can't do which you can do. He's grasped what the Gospel of John has been saying all along.

From the very beginning. John one it said, in beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Jesus is the Word of God, and God incarnate. At the end, which I

read to you a moment ago, John says, I wrote this whole book so that you would believe that Jesus is the Christ, that by believing you would have life in his name.

That's what the whole book is about. Chapter one, verse one, chapter 20, verse 31. And Thomas says, yep, yes, I believe it.

Now Jesus meets Thomas, doubts where it is, but he doesn't exactly approve. You notice what he says? He says, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. But blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed. Now this blesses Thomas, but doesn't fully approve of Thomas. It blesses Thomas by giving him the evidence he demands, but also reproved him and says, you shouldn't have demanded this.

Blessed are those who did not see and believe. He's talking through the centuries to every believer, which is the vast majority of all Christians who did not see Jesus with their own eyes and had to do what Thomas would not do. And that is to believe on the basis of the testimony of the apostles, the eyewitnesses who say we saw him.

Let me put it this way Thomas is a poor guide for doubters. He tells us what not to do. He says we ought not to demand to see the evidence. Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe. The Bible says, trust the testimony of those who are there. Trust their testimony. They were eye and ear witnesses.

Trust them because they gave their lives for what they said. They didn't get rich through the gospel. They didn't get powerful. They suffered and suffered and all but one of them was ultimately slain for their testimony to Jesus. They saw and they testified. They stick their lives on what they knew. And we can two now I realize, and I directly address those of you who are here, who have doubts, who wonder if it's all true.

There are stories that seem extremely unlikely, and yet there are reasons to believe there. So let me share a story with you. There was, a couple of men. Whole names don't matter. Their names are Joe and Simon. And a number of years ago, about 25 years ago, they climbed one of the most precipitous, steep, daunting mountains on planet Earth.

It's called Sula Grandi. And you can climb it from one angle. But they wanted to come from the north or south and forget at the moment which one it was that no one, no one had ever climbed the mountain from that side. Many people had tried and Joe and Simon decided the reason why they didn't make it is because they took too many supplies and were on the mountain too long.

A mountain that had ferocious storms and people would get wiped out and blind and lose their way. And they said, here's what we do. We're going to wait. We're going to wait at camp, and we're going to wait for a clear day, and we're going to rock it up in one day. We're just going to

bring very light supplies, enough to last two, two and a half days and then would come right back down.

That was the plan. And they made it. They made it in one day. And then they started to come down. And then the storm that was not forecast came. And as they worked their way down, as they worked their way down, Joe fell and he shattered his leg. Simon's healthy and Joe is not. And so Simon did what he knew to do, and that is to give his friend 150ft of rope and let him slide down and use this good leg to anchor himself.

And then he would come down himself 150ft. And so they would go down the mountain 150ft at a time. That's kind of slow. And so they decided, since they didn't have enough food or water, that they would work through the night in a storm, unable to hear each other, unable to see each other, and perhaps you have the sense things went wrong.

Simon unwittingly lowered Joe over a precipice, and he hung there, unable to shout, unable to communicate any way. And so Simon waited for hours. For hours. He waited for some signal, some reason to believe he felt the weight of his friend. Still he knew that the weight is still there. What's going on? Eventually he realized what he must have done.

He must have lowered him over an edge. And not only so, but he was slowly sliding down the mountain, as is the weight of his friend was dragging him down over the snow on the ice, and he thought, my friend is dead, and I'm headed for death. Two and so he cut the rope and sent his friend plunging to his death. Except that his friend didn't die. His friend. So 100ft hit a crust of snow and ice broke through. It went 75ft more to the bottom of a crevasse, and found himself conscious and as an incredibly fit person, able to still move. And he began to crawl and hop his way out of the crevasse. And then over the next four and a half days, hopped on one leg over glacier fields, boulder paths, and finally collapsed 200ft from base camp, where his friend had been for several days. He called out a guard, heard it, and thought he must be hallucinating. But Simon knew it was his friend, and they ran to get him and pulled him in. He's alive to this day. Surgery, recovery. He was climbing mountains again within five years. Now he'd lost a third of his body weight and I got to tell you, Simon was brutally criticized in the field. You cut the rope to kill your friend. Do you believe this story? Do you believe a man fell 150ft and hopped on one leg for four and a half days with no food, no water? Believe that story? Well, there's evidence for it. There's the rope. There are the X-rays. There's Simon walking around the world writing a book. In a movie, there's a lot of evidence, and the evidence is all the stronger because.

Because not only are those X-rays, they're. There's also the case of Simon, who cut his friends rope, who would make up a story like that, who would make themselves into such a scoundrel

before the world, unless it really happened. Now, of course, that's an analogy for what happens in the gospel narratives. It's unlikely, I grant you that, humanly speaking, it's unlikely.

But there's evidence. The evidence of the church, the evidence of the apostles, the evidence of the empty tomb, the evidence of the Romans being unable to say, oh, you say he's dead. Here's the body. And Christianity would end that moment, but it didn't end. It grew and grew and grew. There is reason to believe and the self incriminating story of the Gospels that Peter, the first leading apostle, denied Jesus not once, but three times.

Who makes stories like that up? Who makes Thomas one of the most outspoken, clearly etched apostles into a shouting unbeliever? The only reason you tell stories like that is because they're true, because you can't resist saying it. Just like John couldn't resist saying I got there first.

Paul, in a passage wrote earlier, wants to make sure that we know this is true by saying in a different way, his way. He says it this way in first Corinthians 15, which we read earlier. Now I want to remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are saved.

If you hold fast to the word I preach to you, unless you believe in vain. What did he proclaim? For I delivered to you as a first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and he appeared to surface.

That's another name for Peter, then to the 12, then to more than 500 people at once. Not a hallucination. 500 people don't have a simultaneous hallucination. 500 brothers at once. And by the way, you can check it out. Most of them are still alive. You can track them down if you have doubts, then to James, then to all the apostles, and then finally to him.

Now Paul uses words that don't ring in our ears the way they would have. Then when we hear this, we think, okay, preach, receive meaning, believe and stand and say, we hear those words. They're important words. But Paul says, I preach to you what I received and you delivered it. Now those words received and delivered, although they don't sound it to us today, we're technical terms people used in that culture for people who are set aside, set apart, called, equipped to hold fast to the stories that shape a community.

They're the official holders of the story. They recount it. They tell it over and over again. They get it right. People correct them if they say it wrong. Paul says, I received it, I received I am one of those people that was entrusted with the story and you received it from me. Meaning I trusted it to you and some of you have been telling the story.

This is not based on shaky hearsay. This is based on repetition. This is true. This is important. This is crucial. By it we stand. Christ died for our sins. Jesus was dead. Really dead. Cut him and he would not bleed. There was no air in his lungs and God raised him. On the third day. We're witnesses of this, he says. We're witnesses.

You wonder about it. You know that there are some things you couldn't forget if you would try right? As long as my mind is clear, I will never forget my wedding day or the birth of my children. Epochal events emblazoned themselves on the mind. You cannot forget them. Even if you tried, do you think they would forget or get confused about what they saw on Easter Sunday?

Is that seem probable to you now? Somebody may say, well, you know, this world's a crazy place. Strange things happen. Not sure what it means. So Jesus, rose. Okay, I guess I can accept that. But it's not just something to happen. It's something that engages us.

We've all been - maybe not all -but most of us have been an airport. Maybe you're going from Birmingham to Atlanta to somewhere, and you're in Atlanta and you're waiting for the word about your flight. You're going to Chicago. And as you sit there, you're listening. You're listening to announcements. There's a flight to Denver, to Washington, DC, to Boston, to Miami, to Seattle. You pay no attention. These announcements are true, but they have no bearing on you. But when you hear flight number 2367 going to Chicago, you say, oh, that that engages me. That's my flight. You get up and you go.

And that's what the gospels are saying. This is not just stuff that happened. This is the story that engages you. It's your life. It's Jesus is Lord or is not. And you either follow him or you don't.

This is your flight. This is your call to faith. Now, some people say, fascinating. But you know what? I just can't accept Christianity. I can't buy it because of the way Christians just don't engage the world the way I want it, the way Christians misbehave. And they just care about the wrong things. They don't care about mercy.

They don't care about justice. They don't care about the environment, about flourishing, about physical health. Those are the things I care about. Let me answer them a little bit. If somebody says, you know, Christians don't care about this world, I would like to ask you this. Can God give us stronger indication that he cares about this world then that he sent His Son into the world?

Can you ask more? God did not send help. He came, his son came. And if you want affirmation to this world, how about this? That Jesus, after fulfilling his work, didn't just die, he died and rose and took a body again. A body with continuity with marks in his hands and wounds on his side. Yeah, God cares about this world.

And if you think Christians don't care about justice or about mercy. Does it not trouble you? Are not Christians always troubled when they hear about the death of Christ, which is the most

hideously unjust thing that ever happened in the history of the world. Getting the judiciary to condemn a completely, transparently innocent man. Doesn't that make us want to do justice in this world?

Indeed, it does.

And by the way, if I can just reverse things for a moment, you know, we're upset about the injustices others perform. The truth of the matter is, it's not just people out there who are unjust. It's us too. And God addresses the problem of our injustice. And if you wonder about mercy, it's through his act of mercy saying, I will bear the consequences for your sin.

I will meet Jesus, said the justice of God, and will mercifully give myself in your place. That's justice and mercy meeting.

And if you say, what about love in the world? I mean Christians, my goodness, you know, Christians do bad things. I, I went to a Christian school and there was a lot of unkindness and cruelty. People have said to me, well, that may be true. In fact, I'm sure it is true. As a man named Tom Holland, he is a world class historian. He's a Cambridge professor for years, a great author, and, he's a kind of secular person who wishes he could be a Christian because he believes that Christianity is so good for the world. He said, you know, Christianity is what makes all that's best about our world today. For example, evolution should push us in the direction of the idea that might makes right?

I mean, my body, my fitness, whatever. I survived, you didn't, and therefore I should rule the world. As one person said, Darwinist atheism essentially says we're descended from we're descended from apes. Therefore, let us love one another. Doesn't make a lot of sense. If the world is just a random activity, why not? Why not have the most powerful people rule the world?

This is still Tom Holland, a secular person, he says. But the apostle Paul in first Corinthians chapter one says, God chose the weak in the foolish things of the world, the shame, the strong. And that means that the weak have a voice, that children and women have a voice. It means indigenous people who have less technology have a voice against those who have more technology and would exploit them because there's a God of justice and of mercy who cares for the weak and wants to hear their voice.

It's why Christians believe, and why the world largely believes that it is more noble to endure suffering than to cause suffering. I have to tell you, atheists aren't prone to say that.

Somebody may say, well, what about the actual record of the church? It's a problem sometimes, I admit it, of course Christianity confesses that, right? I mean, we have a doctrine of sin that says everybody here is a sinner, everybody here fails. Everybody here needs redemption and

forgiveness. But let's say if there are Christian schools that aren't always kind, the universal education, universal literacy is a Christian idea.

So, you know, as you can read God's Word, you want to read so you can read God's Word and almost every great university in the world was started by Christians. And the idea that hospitals are open to everybody, whether you can pay or not, that's a Christian idea. So there's much to commend. Christianity. You say, well, it's very nice, but, I don't know.

Christianity promises eternal life. I'm not sure I want eternal life. What am I atheistic acquaintances said to me, I want to live 80 years. That's good enough. Why would I want to live forever? he was probably 60 at the time, and I can understand that. I can understand the idea that I wouldn't want to be 97 when my eyes, my body, my ears, my mind are growing weak.

But that's not what Christianity is offering. It's not offering. It's eternal old age. Tell me if you'd sign up for this. Tell me if you'd sign up for this 28 or 29 years old forever. The full strength of manhood and the speed of youth. And can I just toss in your best hair the whole time?

Hair, physical strength, mental acuity and the experience of 80 lifetimes to light the path. Come on now. You want that to be true. And what's the saddest thing about the beauty of this life? Is it not this that they're so fleeting? You're with your friends. It's a perfect evening. You're watching the sunset. It's so magnificent. The sorrow that is there is that the sunset will end in 10 or 15 minutes.

And this time with our friend. It's 10:00. It's 1015. We got to go to bed. It's going to end. Jesus says it's not going to end. We're not going to run out of time. We're not going to say, oh, I wish I had a few more minutes. We have eternity. Some of you may say, well, I'm not sure I'm worthy.

That's a good point. Go back to Caravaggio for a minute. Caravaggio didn't just paint Jesus and Thomas. He painted scenes in the life of Christ over and over again. Magnificent paintings, 30ft wide, 20ft tall, magnificent colors. He painted the call of Matthew the whole life of Matthew, somehow spelled out in one painting. He painted. Thomas, that doubter. He painted Jesus and sinners lie.

Caravaggio was a scoundrel. He was a gambler, a drinker, a violent man, violent enough that he was kicked out of his own country, violent and dangerous enough that people chased him around Europe trying to get even with him, trying to hurt him or even kill him. He was that bad. And yet. And yet somehow he kept painting Jesus over and over again with fascinating insight into the mind, the life of Christ, the nature of discipleship.

And we wonder what's going on with this man. How can he live such an evil life and still seem to understand so much about Jesus? Somebody may say, well, you know, he was a painter. They

paid him to do that, which they did. But he seemed to understand and to embrace, so that actually salvation, eternal life, is open to a scoundrel like Caravaggio.

Of course, I'm not really talking about Caravaggio, am I? I'm talking about scoundrels like you and me who doubt and wonder, flee and run away.

Jesus has done everything necessary to bring everyone in this room to Christ. There's nothing more that needs to be done. You don't have to clean up your life. You don't have to live 40 years without any drinking or violence. Caravaggio could believe any moment and be right with God forever, as can all of us if we say the words that Thomas said, my Lord and my God, not I'm good enough. Not I've been behaving well. But you are Lord, and my Lord your God, and you are my God. I hope you say those words. I hope you mean them and receive life by it.

Let's pray.

Father we thank you for Thomas in his doubts. Thank you for the radical honesty of the Gospels telling us just how hard it was to be faithful to you, and how you nonetheless forgave and restored the apostles and forgiven. Restore anyone who but calls on you. And so, Lord, may we call on you, follow you, believe in you, walk with you, have eternal life with you because of your work on the cross and your resurrection, forgiving and establishing us. So we stand before you and before each other now and forever.

Amen.