

## Devotional Blog - Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April

We all get them! You know the sort of thing- a fraudulent phone call from someone pretending they are calling from Amazon, or the Inland Revenue, or even your Bank. You get similar fraudsters sending you emails and text messages.

All being well you'll spot them and respond to their alluring scams by saying "I doubt it".

Yet often doubt can seem negative. But it needn't be.

I had some incredibly positive results back from a recent hearing test. I was told that I had remarkable hearing for someone of my age. Frankly, I was very doubtful and when I checked the name on the charts, I found out that the results were for someone else!

When we doubt the safety of some electrical equipment, we wisely have it checked. The thing is that doubt is essential when something really matters.

Yet the New Testament character Thomas (John 20:19-31) has had a negative bashing over the years. Why? Because Thomas doubts what the other disciples said about seeing Jesus alive after he had been crucified.

What happened was Thomas missed out on that incredible moment on the evening of the first Easter day, when the other disciples are meeting in a locked room. It was the third of three bewildering days for the disciples, and their minds and lives were in turmoil. What was going on? The body of Jesus was missing from the tomb! Had the authorities stolen it? They can't believe the stories these women had told them. They were genuinely scared, that's why the door was locked.

But Thomas wasn't there. We know that he was prepared to die with Jesus, but he prefers to grieve for his dead friend and leader alone.

So, he misses the moment when Jesus appears in the locked room. Jesus offers the disciples his peace, and they are stunned. Jesus swiftly gives them a commission, just as God sent Jesus, he was sending them out into the world. Then Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them.

Wow, no waiting for Pentecost! Amazingly we have Christ's Resurrection, the commissioning of the disciples, and the giving of the Holy Spirit all in the space of a single day!

And Thomas misses the lot!

Interestingly, Thomas finds himself in our position—he's told about the appearance rather than seeing it first-hand. But like every Christian since he needs to find out. He

wants, he needs, he demands the evidence, the truth. And, of course, a little later he gets it. Jesus appears again in the locked room when Thomas is present. Thomas' response to seeing Jesus seems to be the zenith of John's Gospel when he exclaims to Jesus "My Lord and my God".

Jesus' reply to this famous acclamation is really important because it about us. Jesus tells us that believers who are not first-hand witnesses like us will be blessed. The Holy Spirit is working now in our hearts and minds to give the truth and the faith we need to also accept Jesus as our Lord and God.

We grow our faith, just like Thomas did, and yes, doubt is essential. We question, we probe, we study, we learn, and we experience. The great news is that same Holy Spirit has been breathed on us enabling us to live as Easter people just as the first disciples did. We also are commissioned.

We are part of an on-going story that brings peace and hope to a world full of pain.

So, will everyone in the future regard Thomas in a positive light?

I doubt it!

Mark Gilks

Hampton Mission Partnership