

December 11 2016

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 35:1-10

John 14:1-7

John 20:24-29

Sermon *Defeating Doubts* Pastor Dwain D. Valez

During the last part of 2014 and 2015 we were asked by the Eastern Star to travel the state of Idaho and hold meetings in approximately 30 cities and our theme was “Believe in the Journey” and our purpose was to raise money for cancer. One of the things I decided to do as my part of Believe in the Journey was to pick out individuals from scripture who have a unique journey, like David when he met Goliath, when Jonah ended up in the belly of the fish, and so on. And I had the privilege of delivering those to point out to people that you should believe in the journey and the ultimate goal of that journey. And so I have chosen to bring to you this morning Thomas, a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Good morning. My name is Thomas. My father and my brothers and I run a store in Jerusalem, right near the main street. Many people come by every day and we can look out of the door of the shop and we can see the people go by on the street. We can hear them talking and what’s going on. And the latest thing is that there’s a man named Jesus who’s stirring up quite a controversy in the city. And everyone seems to be curious about what he has to say and what he’s been doing. Well, look here, he’s coming by right now. “Dad, would it be okay if I go out and see?”

“Well, sure son, but get back, we have lots of work to do.” And so I went off and followed the crowd. Didn’t know where they were going, but as we moved along I realized that they were headed for the pool at Bethesda, and that’s a place where there was a great number of sick people gathered. And the pool would erupt every once in a while and the custom or the superstition, you might call it, was that an angel went down into the pool and when it erupted the first person in would be healed. And so as we approached the pool, my there was a great multitude of people. I saw down right on the edge of the thing a person that I know, Elijah. And he’s laying on his little cot waiting for the water to erupt so he can get in. And I noticed that Jesus walks right up to him and he says, “Do you desire to be healed?” And Elijah says, “Well, certainly, I’ve been here many years. I lay on this pallet and when the water erupts I try to get into it but others who are stronger and more able get there first and I’m left out.

Jesus says to him, and I listened very carefully, he says, “Rise. Take up your bed, and walk.” And as I watched, lo and behold, Elijah stood up, rolled up that bed, put it on his shoulder, and took off for home. An amazing thing.

Well, in the next couple of weeks I had opportunity to hear Jesus again. I heard him talk about his kingdom and what would be accomplished. I hear him tell about the fact that he was the Son of God and was sent to be the savior of the world. I saw him as he faced the crowds in the public square and the religious leaders came out and challenged him. They said, "You say you are the Son of God."

And Jesus would say, "Well, I am."

They said, "Those miracles you perform, are performed by the power of Satan." And Jesus said to them, "O sir, isn't that ridiculous? If Satan is performing good, how is that possible? His house would be divided. He's not a good person. He's not a good entity. He brings evil, and sorrow, and sadness, and sickness into this world. It's been that way from the very beginning. And so he challenged the crowd over and over again and particularly the religious leaders to understand that he came to bring peace and joy and love.

So after each time that I had the opportunity to see Jesus I would return to the shop and continue working with my dad and my brothers. And one day Jesus walked right in. and he says, "Thomas, I want you to be my disciple."

Oh my, my heart just, was just thrilled. I couldn't believe it. Here Jesus himself, coming to me and asking me to be his disciple. I kissed my dad and my brothers goodbye and I followed Jesus. And the next three years were the greatest three years of my entire life. Oh, I learned so many things. I was there when he fed the five thousand. I was there when he raised Lazarus. I was there when he turned the water into wine. I was there when he spoke to us so graciously and so wonderfully, saying to us, "There's a time coming when there will be no more sadness and sickness, no more sorrows, no more war, no more difficult times, no abuse of those who are unable to protect themselves. I'm going to be the protector of those who cannot protect themselves. I'm going to be the champion of those who need to be championed."

And so many many times we watched as Jesus presented to us the claims of his person and his kingdom.

The Passover Feast came and we entered into an upper room and the dinner had been prepared, the lamb had been slain and cooked. And we heard from Jesus' lips the fact that these were the things that symbolize the freedom that Israel had from the slavery in Egypt. That the slain lamb and the shed blood spoke of the fact that the savior had released them from this slavery. I think the most amazing part of that dinner was when he took the bread and he broke it and he said, "This is my body, which is broken for you." And then he took the cup and said, "This is my blood, which is shed for you."

Oh, it was a great feast. As we went out to the olive grove and sat there in the coolness of that mountainside of Gethsemane, it was a wonderful experience to see

that Passover supper. But what bothered me more than anything else was the fact that Jesus said, "My body is going to be broken and my blood is going to be shed." Why would anybody kill a person who was so good and so wonderful? Why would they even want to put him in prison or do anything to him? For he'd done nothing in his lifetime but good. And now, he tells us that he's going to die.

I couldn't believe it. I absolutely rejected it. And so, as I sat in the darkness of Gethsemane, and I prayed and I said, "Father, let it not be so. This man is too good to die."

But Jesus came by and reminded us, "Even tonight there's going to be some problems, so be sure you pray. Continue to pray." And so on into the night we prayed, some sleeping, some praying. And then, toward morning, a great horde of soldiers entered the garden carrying spears and torches. And they came and they captured Jesus. And they took him as prisoner and they took him away. And I followed in that crowd behind him, not understanding what in the world was going on. They took him to the temple and I could hear the proceedings in the court. And his claim that he was the Son of God, and their denial, and then the great shout of the people, "Crucify him, crucify him." And the acquiescence of the judge. "I'll give you this man, freed, because I have that right at this time of the Passover." And they said, "Crucify him."

So the judge released Barabbas and they crucified Jesus. They beat him, they smashed him beyond comprehension. They made him carry his cross partway to the cross, but he was unable to continue. And someone came and carried it for him. I was devastated. I couldn't believe it. I went back to the little house we rented and I sat there, and I ate very little, I drank very little. I wouldn't even talk to the disciples when they came in. My whole life was destroyed. Three years I followed this one. And now it's all over. How could this possibly happen?

And then after the three days two disciples would run in and say, "Hey, we were on our way to Emmaus and we met Jesus on the road and we had dinner with him." Huh, I'm not going to believe that.

And then Mary came in and said, "I saw him, the tomb was empty, and he greeted.."

"Mary, you're delusional."

Peter and John came in and said, "Yes, we went to the tomb and it's empty."

And so for the next seven days I sat there in the house, ate little, drank little, spoke little, just totally depressed. The disciples came in early in the week and they said, "Truly, we saw Jesus."

And I said to them, "Until I see the nail prints in his hands and have him open his cloak and see the spear that has been jabbed into his side the wound, I will not believe. And so I sat there."

Finally, toward the end of the week we were having dinner together and Jesus entered the room. He was all gracious toward me. He didn't scold me and say, "Thomas, why didn't you believe? Why did you reject me? He merely walked to me very quietly and he held out his hands and he said, "Thomas, put your finger in the nail print. Put your finger in the nail prints in my hands. And here, put your hand in the wound in my side."

Thomas couldn't believe it. He fell to his knees and said, "My Lord and my God." Thomas has been given the title of "Doubting Thomas," but I want to tell you as he knelt there before the Lord and said, "My Lord and My God" the doubts disappeared.

So I'm here today to present to you the concept of defeating our doubts. Everyone of us have them, driving down the road in the middle of the night in the car you look up at the big black sky and you say, "Is there really a God up there?"

Seeing all the things that have happened in the world we say, "Is there really a God that's in charge here. How is that possible? We have a terrible number of doubts. Today we have doubts because of our finances, particularly if you're Shirley's age and mine. You have doubts about the political situation, the military situation, the world situation. All of these things clamor in upon you. You almost get to the point where you turn off the news cause you can't take it anymore.

You say, "There must be some solace in the midst of this terrible situation. Well, my friends, the pierced hands of Jesus Christ and the pierced side is here today to assure you that you need not doubt. And you say, "I've never seen that. What are you talking about? He's going to appear in the middle of the night and hold out his hands? No."

It's right here in the word of God. From the book of Genesis to the book of the Revelation, the pierced hands and pierced side of the savior is revealed if we merely take the time to read it, to study it. I've asked the lady this morning to read that passage from John 14, and I want you to think about it for a moment. Jesus said to the disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled." What does that mean? Take aspirin? Get the right sedative? Go to the right place in the paper and read your horoscope for the day? Go over to the Chinese restaurant, break that thing open and get your... Did you know that that's a command? Jesus said, "Stop letting your hearts be troubled." It's an order.

We have six children. Sometimes they have a bad dream and scream in the middle of the night. And we wouldn't just open their door and yell in, "Quit screaming, go back to sleep." And close the door. No, Shirley would go in, pick them up, and assure them that they were safe. And so Jesus gives us in that same passage not only a rule or an order, but he also gives us the solution. Four-fold. You say, "Man, how long is this guy going to go on?" Not long. They told me ten minutes, but I didn't always do ten.

You believe in God. I would venture to guess that if we took a survey here morning that everyone of you believe in God. I think that if we surveyed all the churches in our area that people, by and large, would believe in God and the whole United States seems to believe in God. But Jesus says, "Believe also in me." That's the good news of salvation. Oh, the Jewish people believed in God. That was one of the reasons they crucified Jesus, because he said, "I'm the Son of God." And they couldn't stand that. So they crucified him. He says, "You believe in God, so believe also in me." The great strength of faith can bring to us, in spite of all the difficulties we have in life, whether they be physical, mental, medical, financial, whatever it is. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can work with that problem. I'm not saying that he's going to solve it just like that. But as Shirley would go into the bedroom and comfort the child who had the bad dream so Jesus comes and comforts us through our faith in him. The scripture says, "If you pray to God and ask for an egg, does he give you a stone? If you ask for a fish does he give you an eel?" No, the Father is prone to give you good things through the person of Jesus Christ. Then he says, "In my father's house are many mansions."

Now, what a concept. Many dwelling places. That means that in a future state there's going to be places for each one of us to dwell and he makes it personal. He says, "I go to prepare a place for you."

When I was eight years Dad took a job with Kiser Shipyards in Portland building Liberty Ships during the War. And we had to stay in Minneapolis because there weren't any trains available because of troop trains, ammunition trains and so on. And so finally one day the tickets arrived and we boarded the train and we headed for Portland. Dad met us at the depot there in Portland. That was a great thing. We all jumped up and down and hugged him and so on. But let me tell you this, the greatest thing of that trip to Portland and that stay there was that we had a new house. A house of our own. Before that we lived in a fourplex and a twoplex with neighbors everywhere. Now we had a home of our own with shiny fixtures, beautiful floors, even two bedrooms, one for Mom and Dad and one for the kids. It was a wonderful thing. And Jesus is making a home for you individually. He says, "If it weren't so I would have told you." And then finally he says, "I will come and get you that where I am there you may be also."

I know people argue about the Resurrection, when it'll be, is it going to be now or in the future? I don't really care, I mean I have my viewpoint. I don't want to bore you with it this morning. But there is coming a time when we'll stand in God's presence and be with him and we'll have a home, we'll have a family, he'll bring it back together. The whole thing about Christianity is a family. Mom and Dad and the children and the grandchildren and we'll be together in that glorious and wonderful place by faith in Jesus Christ. Thank you.