

The resurrection thought

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Why didn't Thomas believe that Jesus had resurrected from the grave?

He heard eye-witness reports from several women who had gone to the sepulchre. Peter and John ran to the tomb and reported it empty with the linen grave clothes neatly folded. Mary Magdalene spoke to Jesus and told the disciples of her encounter. Some of the other disciples saw Jesus, wondered at the wounds in his hands and side, and rejoiced as they told Thomas. Yet after all this evidence from close friends and trusted acquaintances, Thomas did not believe that Jesus had resurrected.

Why not? Thomas was one of Jesus' specially chosen students. He was at Jesus' side for three years. He witnessed wondrous healings. He saw Lazarus raised from the dead. He heard Jesus prophesy that he would "be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31) What more did he require to believe the gospel?

Are we like Thomas? There are Christians whose faith in the Word of God, the promises of the power of God to heal and save, is shaken by the world around them. When violence and tragedy come, their faith in the Christ power to overcome such things flees. They become mesmerized by world events. They close their eyes and their ears to the testimony of good and proofs of God's presence and care. They listen to TV more than to God. They let go of their faith in good and the power of Christ.

This is what happened to Thomas. He couldn't get the crucifixion out of his mind. The tragedy blinded him to the glorious victory of the resurrection. He didn't believe it, because in his heart he didn't think a resurrection was possible.

What opened Thomas' eyes? Personally seeing the resurrected Jesus for himself. Jesus stood in front of Thomas and demanded that he put his hand in Jesus' wounds. This direct personal experience was undeniable, and Thomas had no choice but to believe.

What is the lesson for us today? Jesus' words to Thomas ring out to Christians, who like Thomas, may be mesmerized by the violence of our times. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:29) We must believe in the power of the resurrection, the power of Christ to overcome evil, even when physical evidence is to the contrary. We must keep our hearts open to the evidence of God and good that is around us. The Christ is here. And the power of Christ to arrest evil and strengthen good is at work.

We must pray. Thomas appeared unable or unwilling to pray in the wake of tragedy. While the other disciples met in an upper room to pray, he was conspicuously absent. As we pray for those in Gallatin, Nashville, Bosnia (and a hundred other places around the world), we can have the conviction that prayer is effective. We must be willing to continue in prayer until the conviction of the supremacy of Christ appears to us. Then our prayers will help arrest evil and awaken men from sin.

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