



## Sunday 5 July 2020

Thomas is mentioned among the number of the Apostles in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke but it is in John's gospel that his significance is revealed. Firstly, he is heard encouraging the other disciples to go to Judæa with Jesus; then, not knowing what Jesus meant when he talked about where he was to go elicited the answer that Jesus was himself the Way. But probably most famously he was the Apostle notably unconvinced by reports of the resurrection of Jesus, causing Jesus to show him the marks in his hands and feet and side. Thomas then proclaims the words that have been described as the great climax to John's gospel by saying to Jesus, 'My Lord and my God!'

- All Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymn is a Youtube link. Please hover the mouse over the link, press Ctrl and then return.

HYMN [Take my life and let it be](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

## The welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**All**    **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All**    **Amen.**

## **The Gloria**

This version of the Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

**All**    **Glory be to God in Heaven,  
Songs of joy and peace we bring,  
Thankful hearts and voices raising,  
To creation's Lord we sing.  
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,  
Glory be to God our King:  
Glory be to God our King.**

**Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,  
Bore the load of this world's sin;  
Only Son of God the Father,  
You have brought us peace within.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,  
Now your glorious reign begin:  
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,  
You we praise with one accord.  
None in heav'n or earth is like you,  
Only you are Christ the Lord.  
With the Father and the Spirit,  
Ever worshipped and adored:  
Ever worshipped and adored.**

### **The Collect for St Thomas**

Almighty and eternal God,  
who, for the firmer foundation of our faith,  
allowed your holy apostle Thomas  
to doubt the resurrection of your Son  
till word and sight convinced him:  
grant to us, who have not seen, that we also may believe  
and so confess Christ as our Lord and our God;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

### **First reading**

A reading from the Prophet Habakkuk

I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it

will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith. *Habbakuk 2:1-4*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. *Ephesians 2:19-22*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Thomas (who was called 'the Twin'), one of the twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.' *John 20:24-29*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

I don't like sharing personal details in a sermon but I'll make an exception for St Thomas. He was a twin and so am I. Let me explain what being a twin was (and still can be) like.

Being a twin is confusing. I cannot begin to count the number of times someone has spoken to me thinking I'm my brother; and he can say the same. This form of mistaken identity can make you feel as though you're not a complete person. You share an appearance and folk assume you share a personality, likes, dislikes fears, and so on. Part of the confusion is people arguing with you, telling you what and who you are (when you're not) and telling you what you're like (because your twin is but you aren't).

Being a twin can be time consuming. Apart from the endless explaining, 'No I'm Paul ...' is the time spent trying to second guess the mistakes. In fact, by my teens, my brother and I felt compelled to adopt a dress code so that friends could avoid confusion. 'Look for the blue shirt!' we'd say, but no-one noticed. People say, 'Oh, it must have been fun playing tricks on people!' and thinking me a killjoy when I try to explain what it was (and still is) really like, as above.

And being a twin can feel shameful. Folk often thought they saw me when in fact they'd seen my brother. People told me secrets intended for him. We were accused of being insensitive for 'not remembering' after someone said something to the one intending the confidence for the other. We both lost many friends this way.

So when I read today's Gospel I don't see a *doubting* Thomas. Instead, I see someone who has probably suffered for being a twin and has had to learn from his awkward inheritance. Even now, two millennia later, he's blamed for doubting when in fact he's not so much doubting as seeking clarification. Let me explain.

Most of the disciples have assembled in the upper room when Jesus appears to them. Thomas arrives much later, after Jesus has gone, so they say to him, 'We've seen Jesus!' Thomas will have replied between gritted teeth, 'No, you saw someone who merely *looked* like Jesus. You have fallen into the classic mistake. I suffer the same problem every single day of my life. It was someone else!' He feels justified in this stance because he knows exactly what it feels like. He knows the cost of looking like someone else. He will have told the other disciples that they were mistaken: they were fooled and are foolish.

When viewing the passion narratives in this different light, we may see many more cases of blind action following an unquestioned belief:

- At Bethany a week before the first Palm Sunday, the disciples see a sex worker getting too close to their holy man Jesus and respond by shooing her away. By contrast, Jesus sees Mary Magdalene as a real woman, a person who has suffered and was asking him for forgiveness. Jesus saw the right woman, responded correctly, and Mary grew in faith: all the Gospels tell us she was one of the first to witness Jesus' resurrection.

- The crowds on the street got it wrong not once but twice. They first see a military messiah and later that same week they see an imposter. Each time they acted on their false perceptions, first lauding him as an earthly liberator and later had him executed.
- There are many more examples from Peter the (almost) rock; Judas the 'disciple' who was actually a betrayer; Pilate the 'governor' who so scared of popular opinion that he preferred to listen to a crowd than oversee Roman law; a Centurion sees a peasant fit for gruesome execution and ends up saying, 'This man was the Son of God'.

But it's not all bad: being a twin gave Thomas an advantage over the other disciples. Later in the story, Thomas meets Jesus. This time it's a first-hand encounter so he sees Jesus and doesn't need to rely on other witnesses. It also enables him to leap ahead of his fellow disciples. Having been a repeated victim of mistaken identity he computes the importance of proof, finds it when he sees Jesus' hands and side, and then acts quickly. This time, even though the disciples have seen Jesus twice and Thomas has only seen him once, it's Thomas who utters the first draft of the Apostles' Creed when he says, 'My Lord and my God!'

So the message of St Thomas is not the superiority of blind belief over blind doubt. Blind doubt is indeed unhelpful and unwise—Jesus says so in this story. Rather, it's saying that intelligent doubt is better than blind faith if used as a means of reaching a greater, mature faith. So, for a twin, the real message of this story is that a questioning doubt can lead to belief. And in this story, that message translates into checking to see if a person who looks like Jesus is indeed the real Jesus and then act accordingly.

Before today's Gospel passage, Thomas had seen saw Jesus crucified and heard the crowds shouting for blood, so he knew the power of mistaken identity. Many of us do. That's why Thomas waited before deciding what he should do. He wanted to make sure of the person he thought he saw. *But then he acted ... and acted decisively.* History says that straight after Pentecost, Thomas travelled to India to establish the oldest Church still on earth, the *Bar Toma*, the 'Church of Thomas' which is still there today.

The Gospel passage is therefore inviting us to look at Jesus and first decide who we see. Is it Jesus the prophet or his twin Jesus the holy man? Or is it Jesus the miracle worker or his twin Jesus the Son of God? Or is it Jesus the Messiah, or Jesus the fulfilment of the law, or Jesus the human part of God the Trinity ... do we see Jesus or do we see someone who outwardly looks like him? We need to get to know

him before we can recognise him out of context, in others, demonstrating his trademark unpredictability.

Each of these lookalike Jesuses requires a response. That response needs to include a brief analysis: 'is this the true Jesus or someone who merely looks like him?' We then act in faith, our actions demonstrating that we wish to live by the new creed, 'My Lord and my God!'

## **Prayers of intercession**

Lord we pray for those who struggle with their own identity or want to be someone else. Help them to accept themselves and discover their own gifts.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

**All Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for those whose doubt is crippling and destructive. Help them to use their doubts as a way of growing into a mature, useful faith.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

**All Hear our prayer.**

Lord we pray for those whose certainty in their faith harms others: extremists, fundamentalists, those for whom a strength of faith is a way of expressing self rather than God. Help them to find meaning in You rather than in themselves.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

**All Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for all of us as we grow in faith that You'll show us how to use it for the building up of the Church.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

**All Hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## The peace

May the God of peace sanctify you: may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before him at the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints.

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

**All And also with you.**

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,  
who has transformed those we remember today,  
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ.  
Amen.**

# The Liturgy of the Sacrament

## Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy  
that we should always sing of your glory,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

For you are the hope of the nations,  
the builder of the city that is to come.

Your love made visible in Jesus Christ  
brings home the lost,  
restores the sinner

and gives dignity to the despised.

In his face your light shines out,  
flooding lives with goodness and truth,  
gathering into one in your kingdom  
a divided and broken humanity.

Therefore with all who can give voice in your creation  
we glorify your name,  
for ever praising you and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.  
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.  
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with St Thomas and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us.  
Amen.**

Communion is distributed.

### Prayer after Communion

Lord God, the source of truth and love,  
keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,  
united in prayer and the breaking of bread,  
and one in joy and simplicity of heart,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Amen**

**All**    **Almighty God,**  
**we thank you for feeding us**  
**with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.**  
**Through him we offer you our souls and bodies**  
**to be a living sacrifice.**  
**Send us out**  
**in the power of your Spirit**  
**to live and work**  
**to your praise and glory.**  
**Amen.**