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SPEAKER

Thomas West

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Fully Alive

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The Great Giver

SCRIPTURE

John 20:19-31



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Thank you so much for being here this morning. If you slipped in since I was last up here, welcome to everybody here this morning. If we don't know each other yet, my name is Thomas and I serve as one of the pastors here at Providence. So thankful that we get to share this time in this place together this morning. Special welcome to guests and visitors in the house with us. As always, a special welcome to those of you joining us at home or somewhere else via the live stream. We're happy to have you as well. This morning we are in John chapter 20 so if you brought a Bible with you please open up to John chapter 20 and we will rendezvous there. We're going to study verse 19 down through the end of the chapter which will take us all the way over to verse 31. John 30 and 31 are going to be very familiar for many of you that have been hanging in throughout this teaching series.

Taken us over a year and a half now. About a year in this text in particular and if you're just coming in, if you missed last week or if you're still stunned by the news, let's just take a moment to recap. Last week we celebrated Easter commemorating the fact that one day in this world Jesus rose from the dead. The equivalent to that is one of us loses a friend. We host the funeral right here. We carry right down the street, lay our friend into the ground, there's six feet of dirt on top, and we're across the street at Starbucks one day and the friend walks in.

Utterly incredible stuff. The resurrection is the most significant part of the Christian faith because if Jesus rose from the dead, then everything he said is true. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christianity can be slotted among the shelves of deflated world religions and empty philosophies that don't have anything to offer. It all hinges on this fact that Jesus rose from the dead. This morning, we get to continue looking at how Jesus encountered people after he rose from the dead. What did he say? What did he do? How did they respond? This is what we get to look at this morning. Before we read John chapter 20:19-31 together, what we need more than anything in this moment isn't for us to be able to read all the words or hang in for the next 30 or 40 minutes. We need God to reveal himself to us through His word. The scriptures tell us that God will do that if we ask Him, so let's ask Him together.

God, would You be so kind to reveal Yourself to us in Your word? To help us to see Jesus in resurrected power and glory? God we pray that you would help us to find ourselves in this passage of scripture. Help us to find ourselves among people who believe and desire to grow stronger in our belief. Help us to find ourselves as people that may have doubts. We may be skeptical. We may want to believe, but it's just hard. Help us to find our self in the scripture this morning as Jesus addressing us, pursuing us and giving life. God work. Work like only You can. We trust you for it in Jesus name. Amen.

John chapter 20 verse 19 starts like this. “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the 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, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.””

Verse 24. “Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 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, the place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” 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.” 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.” 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 believed.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 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.” Think about this with me. The Bible has two parts. An Old Testament and a New Testament. The New Testament has 27 books. Four gospels which give unique biographical accounts of the person and life of Jesus Christ. 21 letters written to churches to explain the events of Jesus and to help us understand who he is and what that means for our lives. The New Testament has one history book about the early church that tells us how the news, about the events that we’re looking at here spread throughout the ancient world. The New Testament has one prophesy book, Revelation, which is given to ground the church in faith. Every one of these books deals with Jesus as the resurrected living Lord of all.

Every one of these books presents Jesus as the centerpiece of the universe and every one of these books encourages us to believe that Jesus is the son of God and perhaps there’s no clearer place than right here in the book of John chapter 20, verses 30 to 31. This is why we have all of this information so that we may believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and we may have life in his name. We all need to believe. Even those of us in here that we’ve been trusting Jesus, been running with Jesus for maybe 20 years. We all know what it’s like when we have those times when ... You can’t fall out of the family. We’re still in the family, we’re just struggling. We can come to this this morning. We can be strengthened. We can believe. Others of us here apart of this some way some how, we’ve never encountered Jesus. Maybe we’ve encountered him, but we just haven’t believed him.

We have this so that we can believe. This morning we're considering how the first people to encounter the resurrected Jesus responded and ultimately believed. I want you to know I love Easter more than any other day, more than any other holiday we celebrate because it's great that he came, but it's really, really great that he came and he died for us and he gave his life for us and he rose from the dead for us. As he rose from the dead for us and as he gave his life for us, that can be some hard news to encounter. Can you imagine a friend that you put in the ground, he comes back to visit. That would be a hard thing to encounter. While I love Easter more than any other day of the year, I probably love these portions of scripture more than any other portion, because in them I find myself. Not just some dude named Thomas in here but I find myself in the reactions of the people. Are you kidding me? Listen to these emotions and see if any of them register with the last week of your life.

People are, I think what's the technical word here? Freaking out. People are worried, scared, doubting, anxious, and weeping. I don't know about you but these are my kind of people. These are my kinds of emotions. I love this stuff because I resonate with these people. In the real flesh and blood emotion of life that we see here and I feel it in my own life. Let's ease in to this text. I'm going to share with you a few truths about what Jesus is doing here and how Jesus helps us believe. First thing I want you to see is this - Jesus provides peace and purpose for our wandering hearts.

Right here in the first set of verses, verse 19 to 24, we see Jesus providing peace and purpose for our wandering hearts. Let's continue with this idea. Think about the human elements in this chapter of scripture. The disciples huddled up in a room, thinking about everything they just experienced. Imagine the emotions. Fear of the Jews. They followed the one who upset the religious establishment and now their leader is gone. Fear of the state. They must have been afraid that they could be accused of being the ones to take the body to vindicate what he said. Worried. The emotion what's going to happen next. Hopeless. They gave three good solid years to following him, but now what?

Anxiety. Worrying about the future, trying to live tomorrow's issues on today's fuel. Anxiety. Think about what we see. There was an amazing victory. We can see it. We have this privileged position as readers, but they can't. Amazing victory and untransformed life. Have you ever had a moment when you struggled to believe in God? I know I've had a pile of them. Maybe the pregnancy test comes back negative again. You get the call. It's the doctor. The biopsy said cancer. You find out a child isn't walking with the Lord. I remember being a young guy and having the loss of my grandfather, right after, soon after believing in Jesus having to process these emotions. If God is control, why is this happening? I think all of us have had some times when it's hard to believe. I think all of us have experienced some circumstances that make our hearts wonder.

The truth is that every heart in here, we've had times of turbulence, we've had some rough water, and we need the peace and purpose that only Jesus can give to us and that's what he does. Look at two different parts of this text. We're in 19 to 24. Let's look at verses 19, 20, and 21. Notice how Jesus comforts with revelation. He provides peace to us. Jesus comes into this situation and he says, "Peace be with you." The irony of this moment. That moment was anything but peaceful, but this is how Jesus enters in. Hey. Peace be with you. I'm here. Look what he does next.

Jesus shows up and reveals himself to his people. Notice how he calms their hearts. Jesus doesn't come into a situation, says this is what you're worried about. This is what you're thinking about. This is what you can't figure out. He doesn't come into life and just start chopping up all of these little reasons to help us understand why things are the way they are. Instead, Jesus enters in to the situation and he reveals himself to us. He provides ... He does not necessarily provide reasons as much as he provides revelation. Think about what this means for us. When you and I are in a jam or when you and I experience loss, we need revelation from God more than we need a bunch of reasons about why this might be the way that it is.

What helps people believe isn't an explanation as much as it's an event. We can think about what this means for us as we do life together in community. When things are hard, yes we need to go to each other, yes we need propositional truth. We need to tell people. We need to look people in the eye, arms on the shoulders and speak words of scripture to them in love. What we're doing in that moment, the ultimate thing that we're trying to get to is we're trying to ground people in the events of Jesus. He rose from the dead for us. He loves us. He came for us. Trying to ground people in who Jesus is. Not only that, but he leads us with his spirit. Look at verses 22 and 23. He leads us with his spirit. Look how he provides purpose for our wandering and anxious hearts.

He comforts us with his presence, doesn't he? In an acted out parable, a promise of Pentecost, a promise of Acts chapter two, he breathes on them the Holy Spirit. He tells them that under the inspiration and authority of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit guides their lives, they have an imparted authority. Whatever the church does through the leading of the Spirit is God working through us. Think about what this means church. This same spirit that spoke oceans into existence. The same Spirit that parted the Red Sea in two. The same Spirit that looked on to Ezekiel's valley of dry bones is the same Spirit that's inside of us today.

This is amazing. God, who created. God who has worked in time. His Spirit is in his people. The very breath that created is the breath in our lungs, friend. Look how Jesus is working. He's providing peace, he's giving purpose, he's given us direction for our lives by how he reveals himself to us. 20th century missionary theologian Leslie Newbigin said it like this - "Peace is his gift to them. But the gift of peace is not for them alone. On the contrary, Jesus has chosen and appointed them to be the bearers of shalom, the bearers of this peace into the life of the world. 40 times in this gospel, Jesus is described as the one who is sent by the Father and now, Jesus sends them to continue and to complete his mission."

For those times in life when we feel like the waves are going to ultimately crush us, let's remember this. Let's remember how Jesus enters in to a situation and what he gives people more than reasons about this and that is revelation about who he is. Let's remember that Jesus time and time again we've seen this over and over again he redirects our emotions. He redirects our affections away from things that are a waste of time. Away from things that aren't going to add anything to our lives and he puts us on track with our ultimate purpose again.

We've seen Jesus do this over and over again. We saw him in Matthew chapter six while he's teaching us how to pray, he's like, "Listen, take all that energy, take all that desire to figure out tomorrow and put it into praying for today. Praying for eternity. We've seen Jesus redirect before. His disciples came to him excited about how after Jesus had sent them out, they came back with news. Listen Jesus, this is awesome because what you said is real. Even the demons are subject to us in your name. Jesus says, "Hey take all of that excitement right there and don't rejoice in the fact that I've made subject to you church. Rejoice in the fact that your name is written in the book of life."

See him doing it again. Hey look. Take all this emotion, take all this energy, and let's direct it at mission. Peace for our one dream. Restless, stormy, hopeless hearts and purpose for our lives. When Jesus addresses us three times in this passage by saying peace be with you, yes he intends for peace to be with us but he also intends to make us ambassadors of peace. To make us messengers of peace and if we remember his words from Matthew chapter five, it is the peacemakers who will inherit the earth. This is ours as we believe. Second thing I want you to see here is this. Jesus proves his identity through both events and explanations.

We see this in his encounter with Thomas verses 24 to 29. The disciple, Thomas. This is going to be an interactive part of our morning together. What's the one word, when you think about Thomas, you think about his life, you think about his reputation, what's the one word that comes to mind? Go ahead and call it out.

Congregation: Doubting.

Thomas West: Doubting, right? No other disciple got named for his struggle except for the disciple Thomas. You didn't have Peter the proud, you didn't have Andrew the arrogant. We didn't have any of that. We had doubting Thomas. Let's just ask ourselves questions for a moment. Why did this happen? Why? Out of all the guys, out of all the issues, out of all the disciples, why this one name and why this one struggle? He had his doubts. His friends saw Jesus. His friends came to him. His friends all had the same story about how they saw Jesus and how that event went down and he still doubted. He didn't believe.

I think the reason that Thomas is associated with this one struggle is because so many people identify with it down through the years. We hear this news about Jesus and it almost sounds too good to be true and this doubt or this skepticism if you'd like, this unbelief, I think it's loaded up into this name. It's loaded up in to this man that we see here because all of us in some way, we can all connect with this one. We can all connect with his problem and his struggle. Let's look at how Jesus enters into his life and situation. First, notice that Jesus convinces people through events. God acts in time and history. The action is why people believe. When you share the gospel with somebody, yes you're giving an explanation about God, yes you're acting in that moment. What ultimately save someone is the fact that God acts in that moment, that God moves in an unbelieving heart, and God brings people from death into life.

God convinces people through events. Our words ought to testify. They ought to point back to the events of Jesus. They ought to point back like all of scripture does to the gospels. These four biographical pictures of the life of Jesus. Jesus, he comes in and watch him. He's going to do it. He's going to convince him. Not by long reasoned explanations which are good. He's going to convince him through an event. He comforts his people not by explaining, but by the power of being there. The power isn't in the reasoning. The power is in the revelation. Reasoning attests to that revelation so watch how this happens.

Jesus enters in to the situation. You thought it's actually been eight days since Thomas was with the disciples and Thomas gave his list of things how he wasn't going to believe unless Jesus did X, Y, and Z and then Jesus shows up. Jesus shows up and he encounters him and a number of things happen. Jesus showed up and he told him, "Stop doubting." The immediate rebuke means that the disciple Thomas was wrong. It means that whenever we are hearing information about Jesus, whenever, watch this, Jesus is revealing himself to us through brothers and through sisters and we're doubting that, it means that we're in the wrong. It doesn't mean that I just can't trust the voracity of a testimony over here. No. Look at what happens right here. Jesus shows up. The immediate rebuke means that Thomas was accountable for holding on to Jesus through the window of somebody else's testimony.

Jesus says that hearing testimony from his people is enough. In a sense, we're on the hook. With this, it's not just the event. It's also the explanation. Jesus helps people suspend their doubts through explanations. Think about the way that the disciple Thomas came to faith. It was through an event in his own life, but it was also through the explanation and the testimony of his friends. Jesus comes to him. He does not answer all of his questions, instead, he reveals himself to him. There are a few things that he was holding out for. There were a few ways that he wanted Jesus to act and yes, Jesus shows up. Jesus says, "Yeah you looking for these hands? Are you looking for this side?"

He invites Thomas in but it's through this event. It's through Thomas interacting with Jesus in a real moment that he comes to faith. Thomas was first on the hook for responding to the word of testimony through his friends. The only way ... Here's what we learn from this. The only way to encounter Jesus is on Jesus's terms. Jesus says that his testimony to us, through his people by his Spirit is enough. The question coming out of that is is this enough for us? Do we live like this? Do we feel this? For the times when we don't, our unbelieving hearts are the problem. It doesn't matter how much someone reasons or explains. We either have faith in Jesus or we have faith in someone or something else. Jesus has to act in our hearts or we will be left in a hopeless state. People are saved not because of what Jesus said but because of what Jesus did.

Think about this. Mary, the disciples, and the disciple Thomas are saved not by what anybody said but because of what Jesus did. It's not abstract principles that change a person but a personal relationship with Jesus. This is where I just want us to hold on to both of these together. He proves his identity through the events that he did when he fed people, when he healed people, when he cleansed lepers, when he raised the dead. He also saves through the word and testimony of his church. It's both. Friends, think about the ways this applies for us. When we're sharing the gospel with somebody, this is part of the process. When we go to somebody and we're giving them explanation and we're giving them testimony and we're telling them about the things that Jesus did here and we're also telling people about the things that Jesus did here, those explanations are part of it, but we don't believe the lie that God saves anybody because of that explanation alone.

God saves people because Christ died on the cross, was buried in the ground, and rose from the dead and the Spirit gives people the gift of faith. He uses our explanation and the events in Jesus's own life to bring people from death to life. Let's be encouraged as we share our faith. Let's also have a moment where we're let off the hook because the whole thing doesn't depend on us. It depends on God. Third thing I want you to see from this text is this. We're going to stay with this theme of Thomas. We're just unpacking it more and more and more. Think about this. Jesus promises a full life to all who believe. This is in verses 30 to 31.

I want you to think about the way that the gospel of John has been arranged. If you've heard multiple sermons in this series, you'll be able to lean in right here. Think about this. John as an author has been really, really selective about what has been included in this book. When you add it all up, commentators will tell you that John actually addresses about 21 days in the life of Jesus. Three year ministry and 21 days are touched on here. He could have chosen anything but he chose these things. He could have chosen to lead the resurrection to an encounter with anybody dealing with any issue dealing in any situation and he chose this one. He chose someone who was close enough to Jesus to know him but still struggled to believe in him.

Then right after this encounter, notice what he does. He drops the thesis in the text. Thomas sees Jesus, believes in Jesus, looks at Jesus. My Lord, my God it's you. Then the thesis, the whole point, the whole reason all of this was chosen is laid out for us. Jesus, he did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, 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. He could have arranged this however he wanted. This could have been the part where he goes to the wedding, he turns water into wine, and it's a way to help us think about the wedding that's to come.

This could have been the point where he goes to Nicodemus and he talks to him about how to be born again, but he chose this one. Think about it. Faith in Jesus. Faith is what makes life possible because faith is what connects us to God. When we go home today, wherever that is. To the apartment, to the dorm, to the house, whatever it is. When you go in and you flip a light switch, the lights come on, but think about why. It's not because that light switch, that little piece of plastic is that powerful. It's because that little piece of plastic is connected to the power source. That's similar to how faith works in our lives.

The lights come on because the switch is connected. Faith in God is what connects us to God. It's what connects us to his power, what connects us to his name, what connects us to his life. When we get to the end of this book and we're given this encounter between Jesus and somebody who's struggled to believe in Jesus, then we're given the thesis, think about this. Believing in Jesus is ultimately a transfer of trust. Not a creation of trust. Here's what I mean with this. We all have faith in someone or something.

We all have belief in someone or something and as a result, we all give worship to someone or to something. Having faith in God is not about just coming up with this stuff that we don't know where it is, we don't know where it's going to come from. It's about redirecting faith, redirecting belief, redirecting trust, and redirecting worship. The disciples saw Jesus feed the hungry, heal the sick, raise the dead. He predicted his death. He called it. He predicted his resurrection, he called it. Then he did it. Unbelief is never simply the absence of faith, but it's the presence of something else.

When we hear those events or when we know people that hear those events, we say not for me or we hear them say not true. It's not that we don't have faith. It's not that we don't have trust. It's that we're putting that faith and that trust in something else or someone else. We're saying, "You know what, I'm going to believe my doubts over believing this account. I'm going to believe myself over this account. I'm going to believe the world over this account." It can be so hard to believe in Jesus sometimes because we're believing in something else. It's not that we don't have belief. It's not that we don't have faith. It's not that we don't have trust. It's just that it's locked in somewhere else. Believing in Jesus is that moment when you transfer your faith to him.

We gotta come to him on his terms. Think about it. God won't tell us everything that we want to know this side of heaven, but He will reveal everything we need to know and He has in His word and He's given a message to His church and He's breathed out His Spirit on His church so we can be these ambassadors and these messengers of peace that God is bringing. One day, I do believe God will enlarge our hearts and minds to be able to handle everything that we want to know on this side of heaven. I want to believe one day we will have minds big enough to understand the trinity. One day I believe we will have hearts large enough to handle the way that God has chosen to work in the lives of people that we love. That'll be a great day.

It'll be that day when people are going to surround the throne of God. It's going to be people who have made the confession that Thomas makes here. Jesus you are my Lord. Jesus you are my God. We'll get to worship him and it's all possible because of the gospel. The gospel is not the news that God makes bad people good people. The gospel is the news, friend, that God makes dead people alive people. Lives are not changed by abstract teaching alone but by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It's in knowing the risen and living Christ that people are saved. Think about how this whole thing is set up.

Christianity doesn't say do this and be saved. Christianity says God has come near. He was wounded for you. Look on him and be saved. Here's what this means. Jesus offers a full life. He offers us a full life in eternity. This entire series has been called Fully Alive. It's based on the conviction that God can make people alive. It's based on the conviction that we can be following God with this weak faith, God can give us a full faith. God can give us life and he can help us to believe in him. Here's what that implies. Jesus offers us a full life now.

As we look forward to that day when our minds and our hearts will be big enough to handle God, we can begin to experience a full life now. This does not mean that everything will always go our way. This does not mean that we won't be rejected or marginalized because of our faith. This does mean that knowing Jesus loved you and saved you will change you and will change the way we look at every situation we encounter. If this is the climactic event, the cross is clearly the climax. This is the climactic encounter with Jesus in the gospel of John. If this is it and if the purpose of this is to bring us to faith. If the purpose of this is to help us to believe, how can we build our faith in Jesus or for some of us here, how can we have faith in Jesus for the first time?

How can we be like the disciple Thomas who is able to look at Jesus and say, "My Lord and my God." The climax statement in the gospel of John. The climax statement for all four gospels leading into this moment, leading into this encounter, where someone sees the resurrected Jesus and believes. How can we build our faith? Five things by way of application all from this text. Number one. Let's be people who listen to the apostles. You see in verse 25 it says they told him.

It doesn't mean they just told him once and he should have believed. This is a present progressive verb. They kept on telling him. Thomas, we have seen Jesus. Did you hear me? We have seen Jesus. You're not looking at me like I thought you'd look at me. We have seen Jesus. Get that look off your face. We have seen Jesus. Believe me. He was just here. We have seen Jesus. That goes on for 30 minutes. He goes in the kitchen to get a snack. Somebody else is in there. Thomas, we have seen Jesus. A present progressive verb. They told him and they kept on telling him. Jesus rebuked him for not listening to their testimony. Hear this, becoming a Christian begins with listening to people who have encountered Christ so we watch through the window of their testimony.

Second. Let's doubt our doubts. In verse 26, we see Thomas taking his doubts, taking his case and having to set it aside on the basis of the revelation that God gave him. You might be a person tuned into this somehow and you're saying, "I'm a skeptic." If you say you're truly a skeptic, then I invite you to genuinely be a skeptic. A skeptic has to doubt all of their doubts eventually and eventually you have to doubt all of their doubts eventually and eventually you have to doubt the doubts that you have about who Jesus Christ is. I'm a skeptic about God. I'm just skeptical about this news. Then eventually to be a genuine skeptic, we need to reach a place where we're going to doubt the doubts about what Jesus isn't and we're going to genuinely ponder and consider the truth claims about who Jesus is.

If you really want to be open minded, then you have to be open minded enough to come to this and consider the evidence for yourself and Christian even when doubts arise, we can doubt those doubts on the basis of the revelation that he's given us here. Number three. Verse 27. Let's see how patient Jesus is with us. We have our demands, we have our reasons. We have what it's going to take for us to be in and look how Jesus comes. Put your finger here. Put your hand here. Stop doubting. Believe. How did Jesus know that Thomas said that? He wasn't there eight days ago. In the moment, Thomas realized that Jesus is omniscient. He knows everything. That he's omnipotent. He's all powerful. He's walking through walls. He's appearing where he wants. He's giving peace to everybody he seems to meet.

Let's consider how patient Jesus is with us. We come to him with our doubts, we come to him with our sins. Like a loving father, he just keeps welcoming us in. That'll help grow our faith. Number four. Let's look at his wounds. This is the way life is transformed. Jesus was not simply another teacher telling people to obey God. Can you imagine how silly this would be if Jesus was just the ... He's the savior but he comes just as a teacher and he walks out into the public square. He's like, "Hey. Listen. God's up there and y'all need to be nice to each other. You need to stop mistreating your wife, you need to stop gossiping. Y'all need to live a good life."

The people all in the town square. Oh my goodness. We've never thought of that before. No. He was a great teacher but he was also the sacrifice. God was wounded. He took our place. He took our pain. He lived and died as our substitute and the reason that many of us are worried, bitter, angry, and troubled is because we don't believe. Remember his wounds and may God use it to grow our faith. He is not just a man. He is not just God. He is the God-man who was wounded for us. In closing, let's share this news with people we meet.

All over John chapter 20, the story that explodes throughout the rest of the New Testament is the story of how people told people this news about Jesus Christ. The disciple Thomas he believed and in belief and in faith, he took the gospel to India. He shared to people the best news that we have is that he was speared to death on a hill outside of [Shanai 00:39:05] for preaching the gospel. What would have led him to that? Believing a lie? A hoax? Trying to convince the world? Trying to pull the greatest hoax in history? No.

The only thing that would have led him there and would have led him through that is that he saw the risen and resurrected Jesus Christ and Jesus through Thomas and through this testimony, he promises a blessing to each of us to everyone who would believe. Peter comes along and tells us that this word that we have is a true and accurate testimony. It's actually better than a prophetic word. We hear these accounts about Jesus. We want to believe. God gives us His word and invites us to read. Let's pray.

God, we thank You for Your word. God, we desperately need Your word. We need to read it. We need to encounter you. We need You to reveal Yourself to us. God, for all the things that we could ask for at the end of a moment like this, God, I ask that you would give us hearts for Your word. Hearts that are desirous of You and desire to come to Your word, to read it and to encounter You again and again. Father, You've given us so much through Jesus. You've given us peace in our own lives. You've made us messengers and ambassadors of peace for the sake of the world so that they may believe in you as well. God, we ask that You help us to consider what that means and how we can be agents of peace.

We pray that You would help us to live as agents of peace now as the members here as we give a tithe and an offering to be a part of Your work around the world. Help us to reflect on you in the right way as we meditate now. We love you in Jesus name. Amen.



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