

Characters in John
First Presbyterian Church
LaGrange, GA
Adult Education
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John 11.16

11After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' 12The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' 13Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. 15For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' 16Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

John 14.5

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4And you know the way to the place where I am going.' 5Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' 6Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

John 20.19-29

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So 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.'
26 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.' 27Then 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.'
28Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' 29Jesus 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 21.2

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way.
2Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 3Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Questions for Discussion

1. Before John 20.24 what grounds did Thomas have to believe (or disbelieve) that Jesus had risen from the dead? What did Thomas state would be necessary to persuade him that Jesus had risen? What finally convinced him that Jesus had risen from the dead? What do we have as grounds to believe that Jesus has been raised from the dead?
2. Thomas has been dubbed, "Doubting" Thomas. Is this fair? Is there a more precise term to describe Thomas?
3. Why do you think that Thomas was absent when Jesus appeared to the other disciples?
4. Read these two passages from earlier chapters in John.

John 14.19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

John 16.22 So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. 23On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

In light of these predictions by Jesus, what is the significance of Thomas' faith and exclamation: "My Lord and my God?"

5. Who would you identify as an example of a doubter in the resurrection today? Who would identify as a believer? What difference does such faith make in one's everyday life?