

Pray.....

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

Thomas, doubting Thomas as we sometimes use the term, was a pretty standard sort of a person, I think.

When faced with his friends and fellow apostles stating that they had seen the risen Lord Jesus after the crucifixion, he did not believe them. Possibly they had said, 'He showed us his hands and his side where the spear went in. However for Thomas to then actually say,

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it", is well, pretty gruesome talk actually. I could go along with, "unless I see him myself" but that level of tactile confirmation... is pretty extreme.

Remember all the stuff he had experienced in Jesus' company.

He had been with Jesus, seen the miracles, heard the parables, helped feed the 4000 and the 5000.

He was with Jesus when Lazarus was ill and when Lazarus was raised from the dead. After the disciples had said, 'But Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?' Thomas then said in John 11 verse 16, 'Let us also go that we might die with him (Jesus)'.

He had heard Jesus saying He must die and rise from the dead, was there at the last supper, perhaps he even saw him die that terrible death on the cross, naked and deserted by all of them.

Where, I wonder would you have chosen to side if you could possibly put yourself in Thomas' shoes?

What would you have said if the disciples had said to you, 'We have seen Jesus'?

Instant belief at what your friends and colleagues for 3 years had said?

Cautious optimism that they were in fact telling you the truth?

A fair amount of, 'Well, are you sure?'

Disbelief?

Or the extreme challenge of, 'I WANT to touch, poke, and feel before I believe?'

Well, we know from the reading that Thomas did get his touchy-feely confirmation and that he then confessed that Jesus was 'his Lord and his God'.

Moving on to the reading from Acts, we start by learning that "All the believers were of one heart and one mind".

That's a really wonderful state to be in and really quite difficult to imagine these days of 'me and mine', of worldly distractions.

I wonder if you could imagine a situation where it might be possible to get to that condition, with a group of believers who are all of one heart and one mind?

In a monastery, a convent, a choir, a house group, a commune perhaps?

But how long would that condition last?

We also learn that 'no one claimed that any of their possessions were their own' and 'that there was no needy person among them'.

Getting more difficult to come up with an answer I suspect.

Perhaps, could it be that they were involved in an activity that might help bond them in this amazing unity?

"With great power and authority, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them".

In the verse preceding this in Acts we read that Peter had just preached an amazing prayer, that the place they were in had been shaken, and that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God boldly.

In fact, returning again to the reading from John the apostles themselves had had a double helping of Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit".

It's a pity it was all 2000 years ago, I would have loved to have been there with Jesus, in the flesh. Would you?

Truth be told, all this stuff can make some people feel quite uncomfortable these days. It was then, and this is now.

We can read about it, think about it, but it is a bit extreme to believe that people can live together today, and serve God in such a powerful way, held and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Some people believe that we should not pray in tongues, should not expect healing or miracles.

That we should not evangelise. It intruding on people's lives.

However, I know that many of you have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit working through you. You have grasped the nettle and put yourselves out there for Jesus, you have seen miracles, been involved in miracles.

You have not been able to put your finger on the nail marks, or put your hand in his side, but you know 100% that Jesus is alive and lives in you today.

Can you remember, what it felt like when you first knew that truth, that Jesus loves you, that He died for you, that your sins, whatever they are or were, however horrible you thought you were, how unworthy of his forgiveness yet that you have been forgiven, that you were and are loved and that Jesus lives?

And this is where this is all leading to today.

What I say now will not be everyone's cup of tea. But that's OK, we all have different functions and places in the body of Christ.

I have a short video that I would like you to watch.

Walk the way video;

https://www.throughfaithmissions.org/Groups/338444/Through_Faith_Missions/News_and_Events/Future_Events/Walk_the_Way/Walk_the_Way.aspx

Yes this is, ...'different'.

Now,

I want to ask you, if you could step out and tell people about Jesus. That He loves them. Pray with people, laugh and cry with people. Hurt with people.

But, not alone, but just as we have read about today, in a team, with other disciples, sharing together and speaking with great power to testify

to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That He loves them and died for them. Never on your own.

I want to ask you if you would go to where people are, people who probably never even think about church or God and for whom Jesus might just be a swear word

I don't want to ask you if you would do it when it's convenient and comfortable, but to be right out of you comfort zone, just as I will be!

I don't want to ask you if you would do it here either, I want to ask you if you would travel 250 miles away, to leave all your stuff behind, your credit cards, your money, and use your phone only once a day to speak to your family and then turn it off. Not read news papers or watch telly.

I want to ask you if you would be bold but gentle, humble, to set yourself apart for Jesus for just a week, to be Holy, or as Holy and set apart as we can be. To say to God, 'here I am, what now?'

To ask you if you would trust God to feed and house you during that week. No food or accommodation has been arranged; it might get very interesting at times.

I want to ask you if you could trust that God will give you divine appointments, words of knowledge, that you might till the ground, sow seeds, water and nurture, pray for people, perhaps heal or deliver, possibly even harvest souls for the Lord.

I want to ask you again, if you could believe that God can look after and feed not just you, but 22 teams for 11 weeks as we walk across the United Kingdom from Lowestoft in Suffolk and from St David's in Wales to meet in the Midlands on the Via Beata, The Way of Blessing footpath. We will share what we have, and pray that others we meet, will share with us just as they did 2000 years ago.

Churches along the route have been contacted, some are indifferent, some worried, some waiting with open arms. I want to ask you, would you join

with them as we pass, and to bless them in some way that we cannot even begin to understand before it happens.

What I really want, is for the Holy Spirit, to convict someone, that you can do it, that you should step out into the world, that you can do just what fishermen, tax collectors, labourer's and a carpenter did 2000 years ago. For the Holy Spirit to convict you to join a Walk the Way team for a week.

Finally,

You can find Through Faith Missions web site at www.throughfaithmissions.org, it's on the weekly talk sheet, as is my phone number, please give me a ring. 07821 359982 if you are feeling driven towards this.

There will be training.

We will ask you to get a letter endorsed by your minister before you can join a team.

We do not expect to travel more than 4 -5 miles a day, but you will have to carry what you do take with you.

If you should happen to be on one of my teams, you would be welcome to bring your dog too, if it is well behaved and good with strangers and other dogs.

Will you come?

Amen.