

Testing truth

John 20.19-31

Where we find Jesus appearing to the disciples after his resurrection. They are all there except Thomas, who arrives after this miraculous event. However, when he is told what happened he refuses to believe until he has seen it himself. A week later, Jesus appears again and invites Thomas to touch his hands and side. Jesus says that Thomas believed once he could physically see, but that those who believe without seeing will be equally blessed.

Now read John 20.19-31 see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

Thomas needs to see the evidence for himself. What makes the story really interesting is that Jesus gives Thomas exactly what he needs. He allows him to touch the scars, to feel where the nails pierced his hands. Jesus knew what Thomas needed and he met him in that need. He showed him the truth. Do you empathise with Thomas? We can't see Jesus in the way Thomas did, but does he still meet us where we are? Have you experienced the presence of Jesus in a way which helped you believe?



You will need: paper, pens or paint.

Either make a handprint on a piece of A4 paper with paint or draw round one of your hands, and write Thomas' words 'My Lord and my God' next to the print or outline. Put your artwork somewhere you will see it, as a reminder of the truth Thomas discovered – that Jesus is alive.

GAME

Sometimes it's hard to explain something to someone else. It can take several attempts before they understand the truth of what you're saying. Find a picture of an animal and let one person look at it without showing it to the other person. Then ask them to sit back to back. The player who looked at the image will now carefully describe it without saying what the image is; the other player will draw what is being described. The idea is to see if the person drawing can identify the animal and draw it from the quality of the description. You could also do this over a video call or on the 'phone.

WATCH

What does trusting and believing look like? Both are familiar themes in films. Look through your collection of films or find some on a streaming platform. See if you can find a good example of trusting or believing, in one of the films (Disney™ is often a good place to start, something like *Aladdin* [PG], or *Beauty and the Beast* [PG] will work well).

ARTWORK

Find a picture of Caravaggio's 'The Incredulity of St Thomas'.

Look at the painting and then either discuss with someone or reflect and think about what you can see: the different emotions conveyed by the artist and how you feel about the picture. Spend some time wondering how Thomas felt when Jesus asked him to feel his wounds.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Incredulity_of_Saint_Thomas_\(Caravaggio\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Incredulity_of_Saint_Thomas_(Caravaggio))



Share and pray

Thomas is famous for doubting, but sometimes we also have doubts. Share some of your doubts with someone else and spend time praying about them.

As you share, eat some ring doughnuts – if you'd like to – to remind you of the holes in Jesus' hands and the truth of his resurrection.



If someone asked, what is your 'evidence' for your faith?

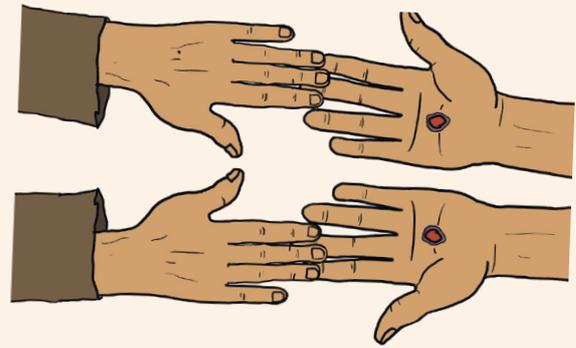
Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

The return of Jesus from the dead was all the disciples could talk about. Every one of them was so excited about it. Well, not exactly every one of them. Thomas wasn't excited, because Thomas had missed it. 'Unless I see the marks the nails made in his hands, I won't believe he's alive,' Thomas said.

A week earlier, Jesus had appeared to ten of the disciples. They were gathered together, hiding because they were afraid they would be killed next. Although they were in a locked room, Jesus appeared and said, 'Peace be with you.' As the disciples rejoiced, Jesus said, 'As God the Father sent me, now I send you.' Then he breathed on them, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. When you forgive people their sins, they are forgiven. When you find people guilty, they are guilty.'

Thomas was with the others in the house now. 'I'll only believe if I put my finger in the marks and my hand in his side,' he said. The doors were closed, just as they had been before, but again, Jesus appeared. He said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he spoke to Thomas: 'Look at my

hands and put your finger in the holes. Put your hand in the wound on my side. Do not doubt, but believe.' Thomas was suddenly as excited as the rest of the disciples. 'My Lord and my God!' he cried.



Jesus asked Thomas, 'Have you only believed because you have seen me? God blesses all those who believe even though they haven't seen me.' This is why the story of Jesus was written down; so that people may believe that he is the Messiah, the Son of God. All who believe in Jesus will have life through him.

John 20.19-31

Did you know?

- Sin is the bad things that people do, that go against what God wants.
- The word Messiah means the 'anointed one', someone chosen by God to save the Jewish people. It's also a title used for Jesus.

John 20.19-31 (NRSV)

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." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had 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 retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, 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 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."

Now Jesus 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 come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.