



Southwestern Minnesota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Sermon by Synod Minister Heather Culuris

Thomas: April 11 and 12, 2026

Gospel: John 20:19-31

*The risen Jesus appears to his disciples, offering them a benediction, a commission, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. But one of their number is missing, and his unbelief prompts another visit from the Lord.*

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

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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.”

<sup>26</sup> 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.” <sup>27</sup> 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.” <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup> 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.”

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Throughout the Gospels, we meet the many and varied people who have encounters with Jesus. Some of those people come to Jesus seeking

healing. Some come to see Jesus because they have heard about the miracles that he has done. Some of those people come to Jesus out of curiosity. Some of those people become his followers, his disciples, and journey with Jesus day in and day out, even to his death and resurrection. Disciples like Peter and James and John and Thomas are some of those disciples who walked and talked with Jesus throughout his ministry, even to the cross, even in the uncertain moments after his death, even to this moment we read about today when Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection.

The disciple, Thomas, is at the center of a powerful encounter with Jesus in our Gospel reading today. But before we go too far into the story that we heard today about Jesus and Thomas, let's think about what else we know about Thomas. The bible in several places describes Thomas as a twin, but we know very few other details about his life. For some of the disciples, we hear their call stories in the Bible, how they leave their nets to follow Jesus. But we do not have an account in the Bible of Thomas' call story; he simply appears in the lists of those who follow Jesus. While some of the other disciples do a lot of speaking in the Gospels, Thomas is not one of those disciples. His words are few and far between. In fact, Thomas only speaks in the [Gospel of John](#). We

hear him speak in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, when Lazarus had recently died, and Jesus tells his disciples that they will be going to Lazarus' home in Bethany. John's Gospel tells us that the apostles do not wish to go back to Judea, because some Jews there had attempted to stone Jesus. In the midst of this, we hear Thomas' voice as Thomas says: *Let us also go, that we may die with him.* Here his words show loyalty to Jesus' mission and direction, a willingness to go with Jesus even to difficult places.

Thomas speaks again in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's Gospel. There, Jesus had just explained that he was going away to prepare a heavenly home for his followers, and that one day they would join him there. Thomas reacted by saying, *Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?* Jesus took his question seriously and answered him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." In this passage, we hear how Thomas is trying to understand what it means to follow Jesus. He is asking honest questions, he is trying to piece together what Jesus is saying and what it really means.

Then we have today's account when Thomas speaks again. It is after Jesus has been crucified. It is after Mary Magdalene and others have seen the empty

tomb. It is after Jesus appears to the other disciples in the upper room, but Thomas is not there. Where was Thomas that day? We don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. Could he have been out getting food for the rest of the disciples? Had he gone to visit family, his twin, perhaps? Was he out listening to what the people were saying about what had happened to Jesus? We simply don't know. But when Thomas returns to the upper room and the disciples tell him about Jesus' appearance, that is when Thomas earns himself the nickname that has plagued him for 200 years of doubting Thomas. Because even though he hears the stories from everyone else, he says that he can't believe in the resurrection, he can't believe that Jesus is alive until he sees him with his own eyes and touches Jesus' wounds with his own hands. And indeed, 8 days later, Jesus does appear to Thomas and the other disciples again so that Thomas does have the chance to see and hear everything for himself. Jesus even offers that Thomas can touch his wounds, even though we never hear if Thomas does that. Then, Thomas speaks words that are a clear profession of faith. Standing there before Jesus, this disciple who once said *Let us also go, that we may die with him*, says "My Lord and my God." This same disciple who questioned *Lord, we don't know*

*where you are going, so how can we know the way?* Now says “My Lord and my God.” The disciple who wanted to see proof of the resurrection first hand says: “My Lord and my God.” For all the critique of Thomas for his questions and his doubts, those questions and doubts move him to a deep belief in Jesus.

We don't hear much about Thomas again in the New Testament, only two times where he is listed along with the other disciples. One of those moments is at the Sea of Galilee in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of John with the other disciples, where he is named after Peter. Then again he is named in the book of Acts in the group of the apostles after the ascension. Though the Bible does not tell us much more about Thomas, one thing that church history tells us about Thomas is that his faith and his belief in Jesus led him to travel as far as India to proclaim the Gospel. Christians in India even to this day call themselves Thomas Christians, because they trace their history back to Thomas and his proclamation of the Gospel. His legacy of faith and proclamation lives on in communities who speak of his ministry as the beginning of their belief in Christ.

As I encounter this story about Jesus and Thomas, it reminds me that our questions and doubts are meant to be part of a life of faith. Sometimes we may feel like having questions is the opposite of faith or that wanting more evidence of God is a lack of faith. But Thomas shows us that a deep faith can ask questions. A deep faith can keep searching and looking for more answers and more evidence. A deep faith can send us on journeys we might never expect to people we might never have expected. It is important for all of us as Christians to remember that on our journey of faith, questions can be an important part of our faith journey. We should ask our questions. We can find people to talk about our faith deeply with. We can let our questions and our faith lead us on journeys that we might not have previously imagined!

This story also reminds me that Jesus meets us in our doubts and questions and takes them seriously. He doesn't dismiss Thomas' doubt or Thomas' early question about how to follow Jesus. He meets Thomas where he is, with what he needs to believe. I believe that Jesus does that also for us. He meets us in our questions. He comes to us in our doubts. Then he gives us what we need to believe. He helps us grow in our faith so that we can share that faith with others. Jesus meets us where we are and he journeys with us each

day. He gives us what we need to believe in the Bible, in the Sacraments, and in this community of faith that surrounds you with love and prayers.

So today as we hear this account of Jesus and Thomas and Thomas' statement of belief in Christ, let us consider what Thomas' example means for our faith. Let us join our voices with his as we proclaim: "My Lord and my God."