

April 11, 2021

“Put Your Finger Here”



John 20:27

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Special Music: “He Did” Blaine Garner

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RImyl8z-s_k

EVIDENCE

“Where’s the evidence?”

I yelled to the wind.

“Though you roar

I can’t see you,

Though you chill my skin

I can’t taste you.

I hear your whisper

And I can’t find you.”

“Can you see the breeze

Or swaying of trees?”

The wind replied.

“Can you see the clouds

Move and undulate

Across the sky?

Can you taste the rain

Mixed with dust

As I breathe into you?

Though your eye

Cannot witness my breath,

It can see the path

Where I have been.”

“Where’s the evidence?”

I argued with God.

“Am I alive or am I dead?

Do I have a soul?

Am I limited by my perceptions?

Is there truth

Amid the shadows of my dreams?

Is any of it real?”

“Can you feel your heartbeat

**As it sings in harmony with
creation?”**

God replied.

“Can you look behind you

And see where I have been?

Have you known love?

Have you known sorrow?

Have you reached out

For answers

And been denied?

Are you welcome at my table

And invited to my side?

All creation, my gift to you.”

**“Where’s the evidence?”
I asked of Christ
“Two thousand years you hide
Unseen by any man.
How can I know
That it was you who died
and rose again?
If I can’t touch you?
If I can’t see you?
If I can’t hold you in the now?”**

**“My hands, my side, my feet
Revealed in scars,”
My Lord replied
“To those who stood
In need of proof,
And blessed are those
Who touched my scars
And found their faith complete.
Though you cannot touch
Those scars I earned
Nor see the carnage
Brought on by man,
Your trust is found in
The path I walked
And the spirit that
Whispers in your soul.”**

**“But where’s the evidence?”
I cry to Christ
“The evidence, my child,
Is in the eyes.
Of those I touch
With your heart and hands.
Your brother’s joy,
Your sister’s smile.
The hungry fed.
Souls reconciled

I ride the clouds.
I paint the dawn.
I bring the rain.
I keep you warm.
I give you peace
From storms without
And give you rest
When your heart, soul and body
Grow weary.
I give you joy
Midst pain and trial
I join with your spirit
And overfill your heart
With grace and love
Be still,
And know that I am God.”**

Reuters news service tells us that almost half of all the people on earth believe in aliens and want us to make contact with them. This is in spite of the fact that there is no real public evidence to support the existence of aliens.

A new survey suggests that 10% of all Americans believe the moon landing was hoax, in spite of the evidence that does exist. Including eye-witness accounts, moon rocks, the space craft involved, the video and photo evidence and, of course, the testimony of the astronauts themselves.

In 1938, Orson Welles narrated a radio program based on the H.G. Wells classic, “The War of the Worlds.” In spite of the fact that there was a detailed introduction explaining the nature of the program, many people who did not hear that introduction, jumped on the media bandwagon and truly believed that creatures from Mars were attacking the earth.

In a 2018 survey, Scientific American reported that 1.2 to 2 percent of the world’s population still believe that the world is flat. While that figure may seem insignificant to you, if we use just 1% of the world’s population, we are talking about 78 million people that believe the world is flat.

The Atlantic tells us that only 54 percent of the world's population has heard of the Holocaust and a third of those people believe that the historical accounts have been exaggerated. This, in spite of the fact that there is a ton of evidence to support the incidents surrounding the horror of the holocaust and the numbers involved.

And today, opinion is too often treated as fact. Much of that is because many of us will embrace anything that supports our personal belief system, even though we are afraid to express those thoughts ourselves. We set our sights on ideals established by successful people that we want to emulate. We allow what is trending to become part of our belief system. The "I need a bigger house," "I need a better car," "I need a better body," "I need the latest fashions," "I need a better laundry detergent," syndrome is propagated on the public as fact when there is no evidence to support any of that. But we believe it because we want it to be true.

All of us are taught the steps of Scientific Method in school. These steps are:

- 1. Observation / Question**
- 2. Research**
- 3. Hypothesis**
- 4. Test**
- 5. Analyze**
- 6. Report**

But we don't follow this method regarding practicality in our personal lives. We Observe or Question something and just jump right to the report step. Then we go looking for any opinion that supports our truth, which can't even be established as a hypothesis. We justify this route because we don't believe that our lives are ruled by science; that scientists are bound to following these rules but we aren't scientists so we don't need to. Too often, we make an observation, state an opinion and then look for anyone who will back us up and we call it fact. We allow ourselves to base our opinions on misquotes, edited media and non-contextual suggestions. Please don't be offended. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that we all do it. Sometimes, it is because we are too lazy to do the real research. Sometimes, we are comfortable by having someone lead us by the nose. Sometimes, we just want to let others do our thinking for us. And then there are times that we believe something is fact just because a certain person, group, or resource says it and we don't bother to verify. We trust that person, group, or resource, so we don't feel it is necessary to check the context.

Then we get upset when people don't share our unsubstantiated viewpoints. In most cases, the true story often lies in between opinions, but we can't seem to tolerate people who refuse to believe the way we believe. We often think that we have arrived at the correct viewpoint based on evidence that either doesn't really exist, was spoken as truth, and supports our personal agenda. And God help those who believe otherwise, because we aren't budging. Our feet are planted and we aren't about to give any ground.

Somewhere along the way, Christians started holding up Thomas as the skeptic. Thomas, who dared to question hearsay, is held high as the standard for disbelief. Thomas, also known as Didymus, who voices his uncertainty and doesn't buy into the stories of the resurrection without personal affirmation, becomes a cultural icon and example of skepticism, brunt of so very many sermons, by being labeled as "Doubting Thomas."

So many people are ready to vilify Thomas and overlook the reactions of the other disciples as they experience a personal interaction with their risen Lord. All because Thomas was not there that first night to have that experience. No one at the time believed in the resurrection of Jesus until He revealed Himself to them. Thomas was no exception. But human nature prevails, and we want to hold him accountable for challenging the notion of the resurrection before he the opportunity to validate the information for himself. But isn't that a basic part of our nature? I know of very few people that believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ without coming into a personal relationship with Him. Until they do, it is just another story out of the Bible. This is a pivoting point in every Christian's faith journey, the realization that Jesus rose from the dead.

What a day of confusion, wonder, fear, and jubilation it must have been for all of Jesus' followers. First, the women go to the tomb to finish caring for the body of Jesus. He had been buried in such a hurry as His followers made quick

arrangements through Joseph of Arimathea, who happened to have a new tomb carved out of rock in the side of a hill. By Jewish law they had to get it done by sundown, which signified the beginning of the Sabbath. There was no time to do all the normal preparation. It was later, after He was buried, that the religious leaders went to Pilate and asked that the stone that was placed over the entrance of the tomb, be sealed and have guards placed there to keep the disciples and other followers from taking the body and claiming that Jesus had risen.

The three women who came to attend to the body were Mary (the mother of Jesus), Mary's sister (the wife of Clopas), Mary Magdalene, and there is references to Salome (who was the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John). They all agreed that they had no idea how they were going to move the stone, but they stepped out on faith to do the right thing and found the stone already moved. They also found an angel that told them that Jesus had risen, just as He said. John tells us that Mary has a conversation with someone that she believed was the gardener, but who, in fact, turned out to be Jesus. Jesus tells her to go tell the others. The news spreads rapidly. When Peter and John hear the news from Mary, they rush to the tomb and find it empty. And even though Jesus told them that this was all going to happen, they are still confused by it and not trusting the information that they are personally witnessing. The two men on the road to Emmaus have heard all this. There was so much going on and so many rumors and disinformation being passed among the population that it must have been extremely difficult to sort through it all. And in the end, it was

still all about a dead man coming back to life. No wonder everybody was skeptical. Suddenly, the words that Jesus had spoken about His death and resurrection were no longer allegorical and they were just realizing that it had not been a shadow of the truth, but was, instead, the actual truth.

We find the disciples that night, locked behind closed doors, fearing what was happening around them. They truly believed that the soldiers would be coming for them next. Suddenly, Jesus appears to them, speaks with them, shows them the wounds in His hands, feet, and side. And then He tells them that He is hungry and has dinner with them. But Thomas isn't there. We aren't told where he is, but, for whatever reason, he is absent when Jesus appears to those gathered in that room. To say that he is a little incredulous is an understatement. History is often written in a way that appears to be unfair. Wouldn't any of us have reacted the same way as Thomas if we had been given the same information?

“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.”

We all want validation. We want evidence. We are not going to believe unless someone shows us some proof. Remember, those that were present at that first visit did not demand to see the hands and side of Christ, but He did show them to help them believe. To give evidence to the resurrection. After all, this was a lot to take in, even for those who loved Christ.

I want us to take a look at something that is not talked about here. I do that because I believe that it is important. Jesus performed a great number of miracles in His time on earth. The greatest miracle was His resurrection. But He healed so very many people of disease and brokenness. Do we truly believe that He couldn't make His body perfect when He rose from the grave? Do we truly believe that He could have chosen to close the holes in his hands and feet and make the skin in His side where He had been pierced by the spear smooth and without scarring? If He could do that, and I believe that most of us would agree that He could, then why didn't He? Why not return with a completely healed body, free of marks and scars? Why did He intentionally allow His body to remain disfigured?

Do you think that it just might be possible that He knew that no one was going to believe the miracle? Even though He had told them over and over again about what was going to happen, He knew that their faith was being tested to the limit. Most everyone who saw Him did not believe it was Him until after he revealed Himself.

The Son of God, who gave himself up for the sins of all mankind, that allowed Himself to be butchered, crucified, and buried, the very same savior that had healed the sick, fed the hungry, and raised the dead had to prove who He was after coming back from the dead. This says so much more about us than about

Christ. The very nature of our inquisitive minds and our skepticism put Christ in a position that He needed to prove to us that it is Him. Thomas was not any different than the other disciples. Jesus showed his Hands and His side to those at that first meeting because they needed to see in order to believe.

When Thomas is there a week later and Jesus appears again, Jesus tells him:

“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

He wanted Thomas to know that this was not just an illusion. He tells Thomas to touch the wounds in His hands and on His side. He wants there to be no doubt about what has happened. He gives Thomas the evidence that He needs to stop doubting.

And when Thomas does this and believes, Jesus says:

“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

We should never lie to ourselves. It is truly easier to commit to something or someone when the evidence cannot be refuted. But we simply aren't able to see and touch the wounds of Christ except through our mind's eye. We have to seek out other evidence. Every person struggling with making a decision regarding

their faith journey faces the same challenge. “Where’s the evidence?” we cry.
“Where’s the evidence?”

The evidence is us. Each of us needs to ask ourselves, “Is our faith in our Risen Savior visible to the people around us? Are we making a difference in the lives and the souls that cross our path? Do we allow Jesus to work through us to right wrongs, feed the hungry, give comfort to the desperate? Do they see the love, grace, and mercy of God pouring out of us? Are we evidence of our Risen Lord in a world full of skepticism and denial? Do our lives point the way to Jesus?”

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Wouldn’t it be sad to find out that we had the opportunity bring others into a wonderfully perfect relationship with God, but because we didn’t allow Jesus to work through us, because we didn’t allow His love and grace to flow from us even though our cups are overflowing, they failed to make a decision based on a lack of evidence?

AMEN

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