



# We Believe

*John 20:19–31*

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side.*

*The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

*April 12, 2015*

## Thoughts for the Week

Scripture: Acts 4: 2-35 • John 5: 1-6 • John 20: 19-31

I hope you will agree that you are frustrated unless you can find answers to whatever is placed before you for thought. Unanswered questions never seem to satisfy our longing, if not for certainty, then surely for clarity to the mystery of life itself.

In a sense, I think we can agree that all life is mystery; we may imagine that we have hard and fast answers to our questions, but, we also know that the answer to one question leads inevitably to another more fulfilling answer, and so forth. So the human quest goes on, more answers lead to more questions until we are at least partially satisfied with what we have learned.

The ordinary human uncertainties in life are not always so vexing. Rather, it is when we are faced with what we call mystery that life gets unclear, that is, when the human mind can come up with no certainty regarding the questions of life itself. We are not always willing to leave this pursuit up to people smarter than ourselves; we want answers and will not be satisfied until a least something probable comes to mind.

It was in precisely such a puzzling situation that the Apostle Thomas found himself one day shortly after the death of his friend, Jesus of Nazareth. He had been out of touch with the other apostles since the day of the crucifixion; perhaps he was filled with despair, knowing that the Jesus' great quest for the kingdom of God had failed, the Leader had been killed, the cause ended. It must have been something of a surprise to him, therefore when he returned to the Twelve to be told that Jesus had risen from the dead and was still with them. For Thomas, of course, and for us all, nothing in this life is more certain than death. What's dead is dead, period.

Thomas, then, did exactly, what we all do when confronted with the unbelievable: he was not willing to simply accept someone's assertion that Jesus was still alive.

He was not about to give in to blind faith; he wanted proof, physical proof; in short, he would be satisfied with nothing less than touching the body of Jesus.

Is this not the tendency in all of us, to fall back on physical proof instead of "blind faith?" Although we have often heard or read about mystics and about intuition, that's not the most normal human gift given to most of us.

Let's say up front, therefore, that all the criticism that Thomas has received in Christian biblical commentary is undeserved; he was doing exactly what every human mind in human history does naturally, he was not doubting but reflecting on mystery.

Sure, there are answers to some questions in life, but we all know that there are many unanswered

questions in life as well. There must always be room and place, therefore, for mystery. We do not need to look for answers to mystery, we just need to say mystery is mystery; mystery is something that is simply experienced. Life itself on this mysterious planet is a mystery: how we got here, what we are doing here, where we are going, where it will all end, if, indeed, it ever does.

So, not having an answer to every question should not be so disappointing. Yes, we know some things, we can prove other things, but we don't know everything. It's all part of the endless dilemma of life itself. So, once and for all, let's take Thomas off the hook and simply say that he was doing what he could with the mind God gave him. He was searching for answers and ended up with mystery, and that's OK.

*Happy Birthday Ardice (4/13) Maxine (4/18)*

## **Prayer Thought for the Week**

God of all, we pray that the light of peace will heal the people of the Earth. We pray for those who suffer the destruction and desolation of war and human selfishness.

We hold to the light of your love and healing, O God, the children, youth, and adults of Mali. They have endured starvation and malnutrition. Please bless them that they may find the peace they seek.

We pray for courage to be your presence in acts of justice, compassion, tenderness, and love. Teach us of your justice. We ask forgiveness when we have not been compassionate or loving or just.

Hear us, O God, as we pray for those who are victims of abuse, neglect, hatred, and illness. May your light fill the entire world, and help us use the discoveries of science to fill the needs of your people to foster peace.

We thank you, God, that in the midst of incredible difficulties, courage and determination sustain those who suffer. Teach us to listen to their cries.

We lift our hearts and minds and voices in honor, praise, and glory to you, O God of peace. In the name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

## **Stewardship Thoughts**

So the old joke goes: if you lend your brother-in-law \$50 and he never talks to you again, was it worth the investment? The joke may be funny, but experiencing this in real life is anything but funny. Loaning money to a friend or family member is a bad decision. Someone who lends money to a loved one has their heart—not their head—in the right place. It is okay to give money, but loaning money to someone with whom you have a relationship will lead to broken hearts and broken wallets.

Check out the statistics from a recent money-etiquette survey:

- 57% of people said they have seen a friendship or relationship ruined because one person didn't pay back the other.
- Almost 50% have loaned \$100 or more to help out someone, but 55% don't get repaid.
- 71% lend money to immediate family members, 57% to relatives, and 54% to friends.

One fact not quoted in the survey is that Thanksgiving dinner tastes 100% better when friends or

relatives don't owe one another money!

Loaning money makes relationships awkward. Parents who lend their newly married daughter and her husband a down payment for a house think they are helping out the new family. Soon, however, they are giving the young couple disapproving looks when an upcoming vacation becomes more important than repaying the loan. This leads to nothing but resentment and pain on both sides.

Don't do this to people and relationships that mean something to you. If you help with money, make it a gift instead of a loan. By not having an I.O.U. hanging over your head, you will keep your relationships strong.