

John 20:19-31

Must You See Him for Yourself?

I've never heard anyone contest the fact that George Washington was a real person. That he actually lived. Neither have I ever heard anyone contest that the Prophet Muhammad, Joseph Smith, Gandhi or so many others actually lived, not having met any of these men and so many others. What did it take for the masses to believe in their actual existence and their claim to fame? It took just mere words on a page and the retelling of their story by someone, be it an eye witness, historian, teacher, parent, etc. No empirical proof, just words on a page; just the testimony of others. Yet Jesus' life and work have been and continues to be contested despite the overwhelming witness and record of others to the fact that he lived and did what the scriptures attest. It is a peculiar thing that the overwhelming argument against the truth of scripture is that it can't be completely trusted because it was written by man. But the history books, the math books, the grammar books, all other books written by man used to teach and train us are rarely, if at all, contested. We never question that 2 plus 2 is 4. We never said to the teacher why should I believe that? We never once question if it was true or trustworthy? We believed it because that's what the book said and that's what we were taught. Approximately 30 independent sources, written by 25 different authors both Christian and non-Christian, attest to the life and crucifixion of Jesus. More importantly, scripture records that Jesus showed himself to some 500+ persons following his resurrection. Of greater weight, all his disciples were willing to die and all did, except John, for what they witnessed firsthand, taught and preached regarding our Savior and Lord, Jesus. Must you see him for yourself?

Considering our text today you may be thinking that the disciples had an advantage that we do not share. They actually saw and touched Jesus following his resurrection. You may even be thinking how blessed they were to see the risen Savior. Maybe more than you. But were they? Let's unpack the text. Five observations.

**First observation, Jesus' resurrection breaks the reign of fear in our lives. V19-21a** <sup>19</sup>On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you." Fear is crippling and will rob you of abundant life. Like the Disciples, it will keep you/us from attending to the mission of our Lord. Even after Jesus' appearance to them and his promise of peace they remained locked in that room, afraid. But let us not be quick to pass judgement on them for we too allow fear to be the driving force of so many of our decisions rather than the truth of scripture. Giving fear power over us that it no longer has. Listen! **Jesus' resurrection was the assurance that the disciples were safe with God. And once one has the assurance of safety with God through faith in his Son what is there left to fear? Nothing, not even death!** Don't let fear reign over you any longer for Jesus' resurrection ushers in the reign of peace! That is, safety with God.

**Matt 10:29-31** <sup>29</sup>What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. <sup>30</sup>And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows." **NLT**

**Second observation, we are a capable people, but our capabilities have limits. V21b-23** “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And 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 withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” This commissioning of the apostles by Jesus was sure but they remained paralyzed by fear. Why? The emboldening of their faith had yet to take place. For they had not received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This would happen on the day of Pentecost. **Disciples of Jesus, if we attempt to do life/ministry solely on the basis our capabilities, we are sure to reach a point of paralysis. We must learn how to stop trusting solely in our capabilities and depend more fully upon the Holy Spirit to carry out our mission.** We are capable people. We are accomplished. We are a people of means. But these things will never be enough for carrying out the mission of our Lord!

**Acts 1:8** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

**Third observation, be honest with yourself and others. V24-25** “<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, 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 in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” There is no hope of rescue when we live a lie. We must stop lying to ourselves, to others and most of all to God/Jesus/Holy Spirit. **I appreciate Thomas’s bold honesty. Unless I see him for myself, I will not believe. How many gather Sunday after Sunday and do not believe but play the part only to remain in unbelief. Risking eternal death. I am thoroughly**

convinced that when we are honest with God, God moves on our behalf.

**Mark 9:21-24** “<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. <sup>22</sup> “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” <sup>23</sup> “If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” <sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” **NIV**

**Fourth observation, what you see can only take you so far. V26**

<sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” They had seen Jesus, been commissioned by him, promised peace by him and they remained right where they were. Afraid, locked in that room. Oh, the number of blessings we have forfeited because we only went as far as we could see. It is said, seeing is believing. Not so with God. Only faith will bring us to the finish line. Trust what you know to be true scripturally far above what you see.

**2 Cor 5:7** “for we walk by faith, not by sight.” **ESV**

**Fifth and final observation, the blessing of faith is believing when you have not seen. V27-29**

“<sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, 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 believed.” I long to see Jesus like most of you, I would gather. And I imagine my faith in him would be strengthen, perhaps, if he were to appear to me like he did these disciples. Yet Jesus says we are blessed rather than those who saw and believed. This blessing is that

of a divinely inspired faith, relieving us of the need to have any of our senses satisfied regarding the truth of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Must you see him for yourself? No, because the Holy Spirit has made Him known to me and what greater witness and proof is there beyond the witness of God's Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**