

Rewarding Faith

John 22:24-31

Hello and thank you for joining us, we are privileged to be here with you. This program is produced by Heralds of Hope, we are a gospel media ministry, and our main focus is the Bible. We are committed to teaching the Bible and distributing the Bible. Each week this teaching is broadcast around the world via radio, and so far this year we are on track to distribute 100,000 copies of the Bible. Psalm 19 says God's words are to be desired more than gold. This shows us God's Word is one of the most valuable possessions someone could ever have. Here at Heralds of Hope, we are thrilled to partner with many of God's people as we teach and distribute the Bible.

Our lesson today from John 20 is called Rewarding Faith. It is the story of Thomas, the disciple who did not believe Jesus had risen from the dead. In this account we know he no longer doubted; he saw Jesus and believed. Jesus encouraged him, "Touch my hands and put your hand in my side, stop doubting and believe." It doesn't seem like Thomas needed to do that because his response was immediate, "My Lord and my God." Today allow your response to Jesus be exactly the same as this.

Before we get into today's teaching let's spend a little time thinking about faith. If you look at how faith is defined it is obvious that people everywhere have faith. The definition is, "complete trust or confidence in someone or something." What sets the faith of a Christian apart from all other faith is the object of our faith.

Faith is not unusual, humans everywhere have it, but we want more and more people to make Jesus the object of their faith. Think about the people who deny any god and say they have no faith. What are they putting their faith in? It seems to me the faith of that person lies directly in themselves. They put a lot of trust in the fact that they are right and know what they are talking about. This is a choice all of us need to make, but I for one am not comfortable with having myself as the object of my faith.

There are some who believe Earth has started from a big bang, everyone looks at the same evidence and many different conclusions are reached. It is my opinion that the conclusion you reach has a direct connection to where you have placed your faith. There is much more that could be said on this, however, what I want to make clear is - faith is not uncommon, most people have faith. The biggest question is what or who do you have faith in? Christians have Jesus as the object of our faith, and as far as I know, this is the best place you could ever place your faith.

One more thought about faith from verse 29. Trying to describe what it is can be kind of hard to put into words. I like what Jesus says at the end of verse 29, I would say this is a great way to describe faith. Jesus tells Thomas, "Blessed are they what have not seen, and yet have believed." This isn't a

definition of faith, but it's a good description for some of our faith. Many of us believe even though we have not seen Him.

This idea is also taught in Hebrews 11:1. One translation has it like this, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Again, there is the certainty of something we believe but have not seen. So, while most of us may not have seen with eyes, like Thomas, we still believe. Some will think this is ridiculous and make fun of your blind faith. But it's not blind faith because we have seen Jesus change lives, we feel His presence in ours, and we know the change He's made in us. The object of our faith is very dependable, and we trust Him.

So, the question today is not, do you have faith? The question is, what do you have your faith in? Let's give our attention to Pastor J Mark as he teaches us more from John 20 and the story of Thomas.

Faith is a very important part of our human existence. We exercise faith every day. We have been made to believe. The Bible tells us that God has given to everyone a measure of faith. Everyone believes in something. Even those who say there is no God believe in something. To be honest, they should say, "I believe there is no God." They must express some faith.

Now, I would much rather say, I believe there is God. The Bible informs us that even demons believe and tremble. There is put within our being the ability to believe. But not all faith is **REWARDING FAITH**. When I speak of faith, I am talking about believing. To be rewarding faith, there must be a proper object to faith.

The story in John 20:24-31 demonstrates what rewarding faith is. The disciples were staying together, awaiting direction for the future after the resurrection of Jesus.

24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25. The other disciples therefore said unto him, we have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

26. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

30. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name

As there were several **EVENTS** in the experience of Thomas which led him to rewarding faith, so it may be with us.

The first Event toward rewarding faith: **His Refusal.**

When Jesus first came to the disciples after His resurrection, Thomas was absent. We do not know why he was absent. Perhaps fear had gripped his heart so much that he refused to be identified with the disciples. Or he may have had other interests or some duty that kept him from meeting with them on that first day of the week.

So, he was told what had happened; they had seen the Lord. But he was cautious, "I must see before I believe."

We can sympathize with Thomas. We believe it is proper to require evidence so as not to be led into error. It is important that we are cautious about the claims that people make. His refusal to believe without evidence was the proper thing to do.

A second Event toward rewarding faith: **His Rebuke.**

Eight days later, Thomas was with the other disciples. Perhaps he had learned his lesson and gathered with the disciples in anticipation of what might be a repeat of what happened before.

And it was. Jesus came into the room, into their midst, and the doors were shut, just like before. There was no ready entrance, but Jesus came and stood in the midst and greeted them just like He had before. It was a word of assurance, "Peace be unto you."

Then Thomas was invited to examine the evidence. Jesus said, "Reach here, your finger, and behold my hands. Reach here your hand and thrust it into my side. And do not be faithless but believe." This was a rebuke for Thomas from Jesus.

Jesus must have known about Thomas' refusal to believe until he had seen. So, after the evidence was there, the nail prints and the spear scar, faith was commanded of Thomas, "Do not be faithless, but believe."

And the third Event toward rewarding faith: **His Response.**

His confession was immediate and complete. It did not take Thomas long at all. He cried out, "My Lord and my God." He is to be commended for making a clear and immediate and complete confession right there. He did not falter or hesitate, but his response and confession came at once.

Now notice the commendation that Jesus gave him. He said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. All who do not see and yet believe are blessed."

My friend, we are among those who have not seen and yet have believed. Thomas saw Him, and the Apostle John recorded it for us. Jesus pronounced a blessing on you and me because we have not seen His nail prints or His spear scar. But when we believe, Jesus said, we would be blessed.

We ought not criticize Thomas until we have believed on Jesus ourselves without any doubt or question. Nor can we hide behind Thomas, for when he was presented with the evidence, he believed and confessed that Jesus was his Lord and his God.

Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Listen, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have life through his name." I invite you; I urge you to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and you can have a rewarding faith too.

Thank you, J Mark, for this teaching from God's Word, and thank you for joining us. It is a privilege for us to study God's Word and learn from it. Now take what we've heard and put it into practice. The teaching and instruction in the Bible are for us and it is supposed to change the way we live.

Don't be like the man in James 1 who sees himself in a mirror then goes away and forgets what he looks like, instead be like the man in verse 25 who looks intently into the Word and is a doer of the work. God says, "that man will be Blessed in what he does."

My friend, was this teaching helpful? If you'd like a copy, either in print or on an audio CD, just contact us and ask for it by the title. Or log onto our website heraldsofhope.org

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Now, I urge you to tune in next week as Pastor J. Mark continues our study from John's Gospel. You won't want to miss it. And until then, keep looking to Jesus; He'll give you hope for today!