

Sermon Sunday 16th April 2023

I don't know about you and what life has taught you, but I sure have learnt a lot from the years I have been alive, and I have also made many observations too. I have often felt that the British are very much in lucky especially when it comes to politics which runs our lives because everything starts from there before being broken down to small pieces that then affect our everyday life. Why do I say that? I hear you ask and its because, when you do not like the PM, you can write about it, complain, campaign, vote and guess what, the PM is out, and you look for the next one. It does not matter how long they have been in office; they can get out faster than the time it took them to get in.

Meanwhile, up until recently I had only known one president. It did not matter whether you liked him, or you did not, he was the president. It did not matter that you protest, people die, you vote, you campaign, you would still end up with the same president. And just when we thought things have changed, we have ended up worse than before but then again, it's the same government and party. Maybe we put too much faith where we were not supposed to. And so, doubt has been natured in myself and many other Zimbabweans so much that unless we have actually seen it, it is difficult to imagine change coming.

Why am I making this comparison and sharing what I have learnt and observed? Because today we meet a man and a character called Thomas. We have heard him being referred to as doubting Thomas.

Doubts are usually never a good sign. Once you start to doubt the trustworthiness of a partner you know that the relationship is in trouble, and where money is concerned whatever deal you were about to make can be cancelled and you are back to square one.

But here today, we see doubt working to our favour. He might have gotten a bad rep for it, but he took one for the team! I like Thomas for many reasons. I want to think he was a brave man.

The passage tells us that they were in the upper room. The disciples and all those in there were thinking, our lives have truly come to an end now. The person we trusted to have our back is not around anymore. Remember all through John Jesus had been telling them about his death and that on the third day he would rise again but they just were not getting it. They feared the authorities.

Maybe some are already worried that they gave up their lives and jobs and left families and now it is all back to square one. Maybe they are starting to sort out their CV's so they can start looking for jobs like we do. Maybe they are looking for links and connections, but we have Thomas.

Here is where it is fascinating. When Jesus shows up Thomas is not around.

He is afraid but that doesn't stop him from going about business. He is afraid but that doesn't cripple him. And so, when he turns up, they tell him, Jesus was here. I can almost see Thomas standing here like me. I know that we are going to have election in Zimbabwe soon but unless

I see someone from the opposition party there with the bible in his hand being sworn in, I struggle to see it.

He is like you and me. We have our doubts for many things. Will I ever get better? Will they be able to achieve the task they have set as a team? Will the boss keep his promise to give me a bonus at the end of the month? Will the prime minister actually change things for the better for this nation? Will this cost-of-living crisis ever end? Will Putin ever have a change of heart and stop the war?

But it doesn't end there. Jesus comes and appears to them a second time. The all knowing, all understanding Jesus who knows there are doubts, who knows there is fear for job security amongst many other things. He says peace be with you. They knew that Jesus was around and yet they are still behind closed doors. There was still fear within, doubt and Jesus knowing that goes straight for Thomas. Thomas the brave. He already knew what Thomas had shared with the others because the passage does not tell us that Thomas asks Jesus to see his hands and side. Thomas had probably voiced what many thought but would not dare say.

Its like when you are in a meeting and something is being said that many of you do not agree on, but no one says anything. But there is always that one person that you want to be in every meeting because they will ask, and you will see all the silent nods of agreement and smile that says thank you for asking even I was thinking the same.

Jesus meets doubt with affirmation. He opens up. He doesn't say: I don't have time for this like many of us would and so not just for Thomas but for us all we get the confirmation that we need. In fact, it is because of Thomas that we can stand here with certainty because Jesus follows that by saying blessed are those who believed without seeing. You and I can walk with the blessed assurance that we are blessed because we believe even when we were not there when it happened.

And so, when we meet Peter in Acts, he is walking in that assurance and spreading the good news for all who have not seen but believed.

We have all had doubts at some point in life and maybe we do have some right now. Doubts about our future at our workplaces, about our relationships or friendships, doubts about our health or if we will ever feel the same again, and maybe even doubts about God's existence because surely if he is there, why is there continued suffering in our lives and world.

Jesus had time and space for Thomas's doubts and there is room for us too to go to him with our doubts if only we can be brave to say them to him, to go to the friend we have in Jesus.

Doubt doesn't have to cripple you; you can keep moving. You can call on your faith. Faith isn't about knowing for sure that something will happen. It is about not being sure but going on ahead with hope. Thomas faced his doubts, his fears and we can call on God to help us to be brave, to bring our fears and doubts to him, to believe and to walk in the blessed assurance that Jesus gave us and walk in the peace he can and does give us.

Jesus came and stood amongst them and said, 'Peace be with you.'