**NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!**

John 20:26-31

So now let’s shift our focus back to the resurrection. We left off last week with Jesus having made several appearances to various people. In total a resurrected Jesus made 5 appearances on resurrection Sunday. Five appearances the same day and John mentions two of these: (1) Mary Magdalene in the garden near the tomb, the first part of John Ch 20; (2) several women on the road, Matt 28; (3) Simon Peter ?? mentioned in Luke 24:34 and 1 Cor 15:5; (4) the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24, walks along with them, eats a meal with them, reveals Himself to them and then disappears; (5) is what John covers in Ch 20, v 19-25. Luke 24 also mentions this. Jesus appears in His resurrected body to 10 of His 11 disciples (they are in hiding for fear of the Jews). Jesus gives them a mini-sermon of sorts, what I refer to as the preamble to the Great Commission. Jesus fills them in on what their mission is going to be now. He is sending them out into the world to preach the Good News, to convey the message of salvation. Basically His disciples are going to carry on the mission here on earth that Jesus began. Theirs is the mission of the NT church.

Unfortunately Thomas wasn’t there for that sermon. He wasn't present when Jesus appeared to the other 10 disciples that Sunday night. And in verse 25 Thomas makes his unbelief quite clear when the disciples excitedly announce to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But Thomas didn't believe them. He said, “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.” Pretty strong words! And that’s where we left off last week.

OK so maybe Thomas was a bit more demonstrative about his unbelief than the disciples had been earlier that day. Remember, when the women reported to them that they had seen Jesus, none of the disciples believed them. They thought it was nonsense. But as I see it, their unbelief was the same as Thomas’ unbelief. The disciples didn’t then and Thomas doesn’t now believe that anyone has actually seen a resurrected Jesus. The bottom line here and I made this point last week – none of the 11 disciples – including John and Peter – none of them believe until they see Jesus with their own eyes. So let’s not single Thomas out as the lone doubter in this group. Thomas has been labeled “Doubting Thomas.” In fact, every one of the 11 disciples were initially doubters. Well, 8 days later Jesus is back...

READ John 20:26-29

Eight days after His last appearance Jesus re-appears to His disciples. It is His sixth appearance overall. This time Thomas is present. Notice that the disciples are still hiding. Their doors are still locked. They continue to maintain a low profile for fear of the Jews. All of sudden, v 26, Jesus appears and He stands among them. He gives them the same greeting He gave them the first time, “Peace be with you.” But this time Jesus doesn’t preach a sermon. This time He carries on a one-on-one conversation with Thomas. Jesus knows what Thomas had said to the disciples, how he had expressed such strong doubt and unbelief. So in v 27 Jesus tells Thomas, “Go ahead Thomas, put your finger here in the nail marks in My hands; and go ahead and place your hand in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Well, does Thomas do any of that? No. Why not? Seeing Jesus is enough. He’s convinced. And Thomas declares his faith in Christ – “My Lord and My God!” This is one of the great professions of all time. By the way, when I think of Thomas, that’s what I think of. Jesus knows that Thomas now believes BUT only because he’s actually seen Jesus with his own eyes. So he’s no longer “Doubting Thomas.”

It’s at this point that Jesus makes a profound statement to His 11 disciples, v 29. His words to them have direct application for us. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who have NOT seen and yet HAVE believed.” Have any of us in this room ever actually seen the risen Jesus with our own physical eyes? Not yet. We will someday. But we haven’t seen Him yet. Still, I’ve heard your testimonies. At some point in your past you believed anyway. How is it that you came to believe? How could you believe without seeing? The disciples didn’t. So how could you? By faith. And what is that faith based upon? The testimony of God’s word. As Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction [the evidence] of things not seen.” That’s what faith is! ***[last slide]*** First Peter 1:8-9 says, “Though you have not seen him [Jesus], you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith – here it is – the salvation of your souls.” Our faith in Christ who we have not seen with our physical eyes resulted in our salvation. So what led you to believe in Jesus? You haven’t actually seen the risen Lord with your own eyes. It’s called faith.

So to make application from last week’s lesson and this week’s lesson in John Chapter 20... We have a risen Christ, a risen Christ whom we love and whom we believe by faith, whom we experience in our lives on a regular basis by faith. This Jesus has literally transformed our lives. Today you and I are walking, talking miracles of God, each one of us. We’ve experienced the new birth, we’re born again. We’re new creatures in Christ. As believers in our risen Lord you and I have been called, commissioned by our Lord. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit. To do what? To take the Gospel message to a skeptical sometimes even hostile world – God’s message of repentance and forgiveness and grace, which we have experienced personally – to the world. That’s why we’re here.

Chapter 20 ends with John’s purpose statement. When we began our study of the Gospel of John, almost 3 ½ years ago, I introduced these verses to you. We’ve mentioned them several times in the course of our study. So let’s read them again.

READ John 20:30-31

The Apostle John was an eyewitness to all the things he has just written, all of which we have studied up to this point, all 20 chapters. We have not seen Jesus with our own physical eyes, but we can read and listen to the words of John and the other gospel writers. They bear witness to what Jesus said, His claims, His miracles, His love, His compassion, His righteous indignation against false teachers, His redemptive work on our behalf. We have been presented with a lot of this evidence. A lot of eye witness testimony.

At the beginning of our study I said this:

Like a lawyer in a courtroom, John calls witness after witness to the stand, including Jesus Himself, to give testimony about Jesus – what He said and what He did. John presents his case that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and through Him we can have eternal life. John is a relevant book for our time as many people have questions about Jesus and who He was and is. Most believe that Jesus was a real historical figure. Most acknowledge that He was a good man and a good teacher. Some think of Him a prophet. But clearly most people don’t view Jesus as the Son of God. So talk to me class. Who do you say Jesus is? How has He impacted your life? Testimonies?

Well at this point you might think, “That's it. John has just given His closing argument.” But there is one more chapter and it’s an important one and we will get to it next week.

“Close by singing “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today.”