



Easter Sunday

The Collect

ALMIGHTY God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech thee that, as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

The Gospel Lesson

St. John 20:24

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 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. 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. 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. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 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. Here endeth the Holy Gospel.

We briefly discussed Thomas earlier in view of the blessing he missed in failing

of his Christian obligation to attend worship on the first day of worship in the fullness of Gospel – Resurrection Sunday! Thomas was a doubter who refused to listen to the Apostles whom he had known and been a fellow traveler with for the past three years. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.* He wanted PROOF of Christ. Must we try the patience of God in always obstinately holding out for a sign? *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.* We learn from the last verse of John's Gospel today that the whole purpose of his writing was that we might believe!

We discussed in our devotion on the preceding verses 19-24 that Christ was the Door through which we must pass if we will be saved. He is, presently, the OPEN DOOR; however, that DOOR will one day be forever closed to those who have rejected the only Begotten Son of God. Once, when George Whitfield was preaching to hundreds of colliers in England about that DOOR being closed, a young man, whose wisdom failed even of his youthful age, cracked, "One door closes, and another shall open?" To this thoughtless remark, Whitefield responded, "It is very true that a second door shall open when the first DOOR closes. And what shall it open to? There are but two doors – one to Heaven and the other to Hell. That second door shall open to the Bottomless Pit and Hell where all non-believers belong." This was sufficient to silence the young rascal.

Fortunately for us, our Lord is a Lord of second chances, for Christ returned to the same gathering eight days later – a gathering at which Thomas was now present. *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. 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.* His claim of needing to physically touch the wounds of Jesus evaporated when his eyes beheld his magnificent Lord appear in the 'room in which the disciples were shut-in'. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.* There comes a day when all doubters will come face to face with the risen Lord. At that time, there will be no need for evidentiary touch or feel. They will know immediately the great Personage whom they confront and, regardless of faith or lack thereof, they will fall down on bended knee.

Do you require a greater sign than that which has been given of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? Have we believed that Word which has been placed in our hands, and even the historical veracity of events 2000 years ago? *1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)* *3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)* Have we believed the prophets and the accounts given in the Gospels and Epistles? Do you need proof that the sun will rise tomorrow? Is proof the basis of faith?

Jesus bore His cross 2000 years ago outside the gates of Jerusalem. He bore that cross for the very Centurion and cohort, the jeering scribes and Pharisees, and you and me, who would nail Him to that cross. He has invited you to "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matt 11:28) Our journey does not

end at the COMING. This is an error that most churches make in insisting merely that a new convert make a public profession of faith and all is well. There is a cross that is given to those who COME. Though our lives and labors should reflect the nature of Christ, we nonetheless do rest in Christ for it is Christ now who labors in our members to work the works of righteousness. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* (Luke 9:23) If we are left to our own labors, what shall we accomplish for Christ? "...*without me ye can do nothing.*" (John 15:5)

Some of you, friends, may think that I quote such verses as this a bit too frequently. Once the great English preacher, Charles Spurgeon gave the very same sermon four Sundays in a row. When one of the congregants asked him if he was aware that he had done so, Spurgeon responded, "Certainly I am aware that I gave the same sermon those four Sunday's in a row. When it has been heeded, I will give a different one." I do not believe that most of us realize the meaning of taking up our cross daily as of yet. Just as did Christ, we bear our crosses daily for those very neighbors and strangers who would nail us to it! Now, that casts the taking up daily of our crosses in a bit of a different light doesn't it? In reality, it is just a splinter from the horrible cross that Christ bore for us.

Christ invites us to COME. Once we have COME, He then commands us to GO! Go where? *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* Amen. (Matt 28:19-20) Isn't it true that saints simply COME and GO according to the Word of the Lord? *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book* Please note how blessed are the believers of our day, and of those long centuries before the Coming of Christ. Through faith, they believed; and through a lesser faith we believe in the accomplished event.

Are our labors essential to accomplish the Lord's work on earth? No, they are not necessary; but the Lord allows us to help as His hand-servants in performing His work on earth – much like a father allows a son or daughter to hand him his hammers, nails, and screwdrivers when building a cabinet at home. Through following Him and doing His bidding, we grow in knowledge and wisdom. If the Lord has need of a little colt, surely He has need of you for the purpose of being His chosen vessels: *Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.* (Mark 11:2-3)

If you are found and brought to Christ by His Holy Ghost, He will loose you from your yoke of sin. When men should ask you why you would live a life of separation from the world, simply tell them, "The Lord has need of me."