
Saint Thomas – Don't Miss the Meeting!

**An article for *The Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*
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We know him most commonly as “Doubting Thomas.” But there are two, two very different, ways to read his important comments from John, Chapter 20. Here is one way of emphasizing the words in verse 25:

"Unless I **see in his hands** the print of the nails, and **place my finger** in the mark of the nails, and **place my hand** in his side, I will **not believe**. (John 20:25)

That emphasis suggests that Thomas was a doubter, a sceptic, and that he wants empirical evidence of the risen Christ, maybe different from what the other disciples had. But what if we read it this way:

"Unless **I** see in his hands the print of the nails, and place **my** finger in the mark of the nails, and place **my** hand in his side, **I** will not believe. (John 20:25)

Here's why I prefer the second emphasis: When Thomas spoke these famous words, all he wanted was the same experience, the same opportunity, that the other disciples had already had! Previously, on the evening of the first day of the week, Jesus had shown up; and he had already shown the other disciples his wounded body, his hands and his side. But, Thomas had not been there, at that first meeting!

When Thomas does show up, and hears the report of the other disciples, all he is saying is that he wants the same opportunity to see and feel Jesus! I do not believe Thomas is guilty of doubt or unbelief. The only thing I believe Thomas was guilty of was missing the first meeting. So, I use St. Thomas as an object lesson at every staff meeting I lead. Don't miss the meeting! Please do not miss the meeting!

Or, you will end up sounding like good old Saint Thomas, "Unless **I** see in his hands the print of the nails, and place **my** finger in the mark of the nails, and place **my** hand in his side, **I** will not believe (John 20:25)." The other disciples, the other staff members, had made the first meeting, and they had already had opportunity to touch the wounded Christ! Don't miss the meeting!

The real power of the story of St. Thomas is that he asked for wounds. Authentic spirituality is not just the glory and the glitter; it is also the acknowledgment of pain and suffering. I believe we meet Jesus today exactly in the way Thomas and the rest of the apostles saw him long ago. We meet Jesus by looking for his side and his hands. We meet the Christ by touching his wounds.

Many of the wounds we touch are in us who are the Church. That is as it should be, for we say of ourselves that we are the Body of Christ. Most of us have scars on our hands, and we have holes in our hearts. We are the lonely, the hurt, the abandoned and ostracized. We are the wounded Body of Christ. When we meet our wounds, we meet Christ.

And many of the wounds of this world are outside the supposed church community – among the poor, the sick, the homeless, outside our walls – among those about whom Jesus said, "Even as you do it to one of the least of these, when you clothe them, feed them, give them something to drink, you have done it to me." Jesus Christ, then, is among the wounded, the hurt and lost people of this world. That is where we would meet Christ. When we meet wounds, we meet Christ.

Meeting Christ, then, is not a simplistic intellectual and cerebral event, one that involves doubt and then faith, or evidence and then proof. In fact, it is sometimes easier to meet Christ if we *don't* expect rational answers to our intellectual questions. When we ask, "How can that wounded person be Christ?", we don't get an answer in

words. The answer comes when we recognize in a great mystery that the wounds of that person are the same wounds Christ had. The answer comes when we touch those wounds and believe for ourselves. Like Thomas, we have to meet them for ourselves.

It takes courage to be like Thomas. Yes, courage to know our doubts and have the freedom to express them. But, also, courage to touch the wounds of Christ in today's world! Is Thomas, then, the apostle of doubt? I believe not. St. Thomas is the apostle of courage!

Yes, I say to the staff, to the Church, to the world: Don't miss the meeting! Look for the wounds. When we meet wounds, we have made the meeting! When we meet wounds, we meet Christ.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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