



Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho  
Pastor Neal Buckaloo  
Sunday, May 1, 2011, The Second Sunday of Easter  
Seeing is Believing?

"Seeing is believing?" How is Thomas different from the others? <sup>Matthew 28:19c</sup> Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Thomas is not content to simply trust the eyes and minds of his fellow disciples. This is too great, too beyond taking in to simply believe on their word. He too needs to see. Thomas says, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Thomas did not need to touch the wounds of Jesus, he like the others, saw and believed.

These, apostles and followers, including the women, had walked with Jesus, seeing not only healings and raising the dead, but also the ordinary days of traveling, eating, sleeping, talking, joking and putting up with each other. In other words they were well acquainted with Jesus' humanity. In the face of his painful death, their witnessing his breathing his last, the piercing of his side, knowing his burial, what could they have known of what was to come?

Karoline Lewis, teacher at Luther Seminary writes:

Jesus' first resurrection appearance is for Mary in the garden, to which she responds by going to the disciples and saying, "I have seen the Lord!" Now, the disciples do not say "Great! That's amazing! We believe you!" There is no response to her announcement. Instead, Jesus finds them huddled somewhere with the doors locked for fear that they too would be thrown out of the synagogue -- their families, their community. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>Matthew 28:19c-20</sup> Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Gospel commentary by Karoline Lewis, Assistant Professor of Preaching, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org) for the Second Sunday of Easter

We can have the freedom to question their unbelief because we have the luxury of already having the full story. We live this side of Jesus' resurrection. We have to work at seeing Jesus' humanness more likely than not. This one we worship was born as were you and I. A mother carried us, endured the discomfort, and bore us with pain that became joy. This one we worship ate real food became a real carpenter, was a son to Mary and Joseph, and did things that human beings do. On the cross he said <sup>Psalms 22:1</sup> "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" In the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed, <sup>Matthew 26:39</sup> "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."

It is too easy for us to gloss over the completeness of Jesus' own humanity. And that is the wonder of what the disciples and women were able to perceive as Jesus stood among them – mysteriously entering through locked door but displaying his wounded hands and side. Yes, this is the Jesus we knew and his wounds from days ago. But now he is here in this place – risen from the dead.

Andrew Sullivan, a Roman Catholic and social commentator wrote this for Time magazine five years ago:

That faith begins with the assumption that the human soul is fallible, that it can delude itself, make mistakes and see only so far ahead. That, after all, is what it means to be human. No person has had the gift of omniscience. Yes, Christians may want to say that of Jesus. But even the Gospels tell us that Jesus doubted on the Cross, asking why his own father seemed to have abandoned him. The mystery that Christians are asked to embrace is not that Jesus was God but that he was God-made-man, which is to say, prone to the feelings and doubts and joys and agonies of being human. Jesus himself seemed to make a point of that.

In that type of faith, doubt is not a threat. If we have never doubted, how can we say we have really believed? True belief is not about blind submission. It is about open-eyed acceptance, and acceptance requires persistent distance from the truth, and that distance is doubt. Doubt, in other words, can feed faith, rather than destroy it. And it forces us, even while believing, to recognize our fundamental duty with respect to God's truth: humility. We do not know. Which is why we believe.<sup>2</sup>

1 Peter 1:8 Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Again, from Andrew Sullivan:

A Christian is not a Christian simply because she agrees to conform her life to some set of external principles or dogmas, or because at a particular moment in her life, she experienced a rupture and changed herself entirely. She is a Christian primarily because she acts like one. She loves and forgives; she listens and prays; she contemplates and befriends; her faith and her life fuse into an unself-conscious

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<sup>2</sup> When Not Seeing Is Believing by Andrew Sullivan, TIME magazine, October 9, 2006

unity. . . In that nonfundamentalist understanding of faith, practice is more important than theory, love is more important than law, and mystery is seen as an insight into truth rather than an obstacle.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> When Not Seeing Is Believing by Andrew Sullivan, TIME magazine, October 9, 2006