Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

It was the 22nd October, 2017, when we began this sermon series through John’s Gospel. And in the very first paragraph of the first sermon, I quoted the last verse of today’s passage – John 20:31. And I quoted it because it is John’s explanation of why he wrote his Gospel; “*so that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in His name*.” Well, this sermon is number 71 in the series and I have quoted this verse many times in those 71 sermons. Again and again we have been reminded that what we are reading is “*so that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in His name*.”

So if we wanted to give John’s Gospel a title, we could call it **The Case for Faith**. In ch. 21, we read about Jesus setting the community of faith on its way. But in ch’s 1-20 we read about who Jesus was *before* He came to earth, His seven great *miracles*, His seven major *discourses*, and the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection, “*so that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in His name*.”

And along the way, we have heard the testimony of **John the Baptist**, in ch. 1, the testimony of **the new disciples**, in ch. 2, the testimony of **Nicodemus**, in ch. 3, the testimony of the **Samaritan woman** , **the people of her town**, and **a nobleman whose son was healed**, in ch. 4, the testimony of **John the Baptist**, again, and the **Father** Himself who spoke from heaven, in ch. 5, the testimony of the **5000 who ate bread and fish**, and then **Peter**, again, in ch. 6, the testimony of **many in the crowd**, in ch. 7, the testimony of **many more people**, in ch. 8, the testimony of **a man born blind**, in ch. 9, the testimony of **many more** who believed in Jesus, in ch. 10, the testimony of **Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, and many** who “*put their faith in Him*,” in ch. 11, the **testimony of the crowd** who greeted Him as the “*King of Israel*,” and **many of the Jewish leaders**, in ch. 12, the testimony of the **events and people surrounding Jesus’ arrest and trials and crucifixion**, in ch’s 18-19, and the testimony of **John**, **Mary Magdalene**, and **the group that included the disciples** who all met Jesus after the resurrection. So that is a **vast crowd** of individuals who have testified to the same truth, which is “*that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”*

But today we get to hear the testimony of one more person who chose to believe in Jesus – Thomas. And it is after John recorded Thomas’s choice that he wrote down the words of v31. So we could say that **John completes His case for Faith** by giving us a **final illustration** and then a **closing invitation**. And they will be our two points today – Thomas as the final illustration *of* faith, and then vv30-31 and the closing invitation *to* faith.

And there shouldn’t be any mystery about where this sermon is headed – we are all going to be asked if we *have* or if we *will* put our faith in Jesus. And I will give you the ABC of faith. And we will also see that putting your faith in Jesus is not just about a one-off decision in the past, but a way of life.

1. But first of all, Thomas, as the **final illustration** of faith.
   1. Last Sunday we looked at vv19-23 and Jesus’ meeting with the group of people that included the disciples. And today we see that of the 11 remaining disciples, with Judas Iscariot having taken his own life over guilt at having betrayed Jesus, just 10 were present that first time because Thomas was not with them.
      1. And we don’t know much about Thomas. John first referred to him in ch. 11, also as “*Thomas, called the* ***Twin***.” But we don’t know who he was a twin of.
      2. And have you heard of the term ‘**a doubting Thomas**’? It is used to describe anyone who refuses to believe something and demands proof. It comes from this episode and Thomas’s reaction to what the disciples told him. But it is not really very fair to single Thomas out in this way, for the other disciples also did not believe until they saw Jesus. And back in ch. 11, where John first mentioned Thomas, he tells us that Thomas called on the other disciples to go with Jesus to Jerusalem “*that we may die with Him*.” So we could just as well call Thomas ‘*loyal* Thomas’ or ‘*courageous* Thomas.’ But Thomas is best known for this incident.
      3. And what it all adds up to is that by God’s design Thomas was not present with the other 10 when they saw Jesus.
   2. I trust you remember, though, that Jesus said to the group that included the 10 disciples, “*As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you*.” So they were to go and tell others about Jesus. And we see immediate obedience in the disciples. **v25** says, “*So the other disciples told Him [Thomas], ‘We have seen the Lord.’*” And even though Thomas did not believe what they said, he was with them, one week later, in the same place where Jesus met with the 10. v26 says, “*Eight days later, His disciples were inside again, and Thomas with them*.”
      1. And if you are wondering why I said “a week later,” which would be the next Sunday, when it says “**eight days later**,” the explanation is simple: If I was telling you about eight days from today, you would not include today in the count; you would start with tomorrow as day one, etc, and get to next Monday. But the way that the Jews counted days always included today as day one, which means that eight days after Sunday was Sunday. So Thomas was with the disciples the next Sunday.
      2. And John really wants us to see that this is a repeat of the previous Sunday. And he does this by mentioning that the doors were locked, again, and that Jesus came and stood among them, again, and that His opening words to them all were, “*Peace be with you*,” again. This is a same *day*, same *place*, same *situation* moment.
   3. But before we look at the conversation between Jesus and Thomas, we can learn something from the disciples’ evangelism of Thomas. For while they could not make Thomas believe, they **told him the truth about Jesus and they invited him to church**! And there you have evangelism in a nutshell – tell people about Jesus the Saviour and invite them to church. You cannot control if or when people will believe, and they may refuse your invitation to church, but the way that the Spirit of God brings people to faith is by our telling others about Jesus and the preaching of the gospel in church.
      1. A couple of weeks ago I read the testimony of a woman who had put her faith in Jesus. She said, “*The lady who did the most heavy lifting to get me to turn to Jesus: - never won an argument with me - never debated theology with me - ultimately never even knew I converted*.” The woman who wrote this testimony started working with the Christian lady in a bakery kitchen from 8pm-4am every night. It was just the two of them. The Christian woman was a Pinterest board, live laugh love, USA, Republican, Protestant, husband is a pastor, woman, and the other woman was a 23 year old, shaved head, punk, grunge, environmentalist woman. The 23 year old said the Christian woman might as well have been an alien to her. But there was a lot of abuse and dysfunction in the 23 year old’s life. And the Christian woman was the only one who listened to her and did not treat her like a piece of garbage. And what struck her was that the Christian woman lived like Jesus was real to her, and she had a deep sense of right and wrong and she lived by it, without arrogance or pride. After working together for three years, the younger woman moved away, and it was four years after that that she first went to church. And the Christian woman at the bakery did not know this. So this new Christian said, You might be the person at the end of the line who sees someone come to faith or you might be the first to plant a little seed that the Holy Spirit one day uses, but what you have to do is tell people about Jesus and invite them to church; if they *come* and if they *believe* is the work of the Holy Spirit.
      2. It keeps it very simple, doesn’t it: Tell people about Jesus and invite them to church.
   4. It’s what the disciples did and the following Sunday Thomas was with them in the room. And once again, **though the door was locked, Jesus stood there among them**. And we didn’t really take note of this last week, but it is significant. I am sure you have all had that experience when you thought you were alone but someone crept up on you startled you. Boo! But they somehow managed to come into the room quietly enough so that you did not notice them. But that first Sunday and this Sunday, the door was locked, and Jesus simply appeared in the room. And that’s something else, altogether! That is further evidence that Jesus is more than just human; He is God!
   5. And then we see **more evidence** that Jesus is God because without having spoken to Thomas, Jesus knew what Thomas had said about needing to see and touch the nail marks in His hands and His side. So Jesus told Thomas to touch the wounds in His hands and side, and called on Him to believe.
      1. Now, Jesus would have been entirely within His rights to rebuke Thomas for not believing. How dare Thomas demand physical evidence! He had the OT and He had everything Jesus had said and done for three years, including three times when Jesus very plainly said, I am going to die but I will rise again three days later. But such is the patience and grace of Jesus that He invited Thomas to touch His hands and side.
   6. And then we get **a very important verse** **in John’s Gospel** **– v28**.
      1. I want you to note that **Thomas didn’t actually touch Jesus’ hands or side**. He simply said, “*My Lord and my God*.” And in v29, Jesus connected Thomas’ faith with having *seen* Him. So Thomas believed because He saw Jesus; that was what convinced Him.
      2. But the words of Thomas’s profession of faith are very important. Some people, like JWs, reject faith in Jesus *as the Son of God* because they say that Jesus never said that He was God. And while it is true that Jesus never said the words: I am God, His words and His deeds always added up to I am God.
         1. And those who heard Him understood this. In 19:7, the reason that the Jewish leaders demanded that Pilate crucify Jesus was because Jesus “*made Himself the Son of God.*”
         2. And here Thomas worships Jesus as His Lord and His God. And if Jesus did not see Himself as God, He would have told Thomas off and refused to receive this worship.
         3. So v28 is an important part of how we may know that “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*.”
   7. And then we get **v29** where Jesus said to Thomas, “*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*.” And these are wonderfully encouraging words for us today. For here Jesus is speaking about you and me! We are those, along with many others since Jesus ascended to heaven, who have not seen Jesus with our eyes but have believed in Him. And Jesus calls us **blessed**! And I really like how one commentator explains this. He said,

*There was nothing wrong with the words of the confession that Thomas uttered. There was something wrong with the manner in which he reached this level of faith. He should have believed apart from sight. For the benefit of those who would come to believe in Him in the years that were to follow, Jesus says, ‘Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.’ Faith which results from seeing is good; but faith which results from hearing is more excellent. This is the clear lesson of Scripture throughout.*

So if you have believed in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, simply because of what you have *heard* about Him, Jesus says to you, today, I bless you. I commend you.

1. So Thomas is the **final illustration** of someone who put their faith in Jesus. And having completed his long list of those who saw and heard and believed in Jesus, John now gives us his **closing invitation** to faith in vv30-31.
   1. And it begins with John stating that he did not write down everything that Jesus did, but only what he thought was necessary to conclusively prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And I trust that has become plain to you as we have worked through this Gospel together. And that really is the question, isn’t it: **Is it plain to you**? What John wrote was so that ***you*** might put ***your*** faith in Jesus as your Saviour and Lord. Have you done this? Would you like to do this today? If so, then I must tell you about the ABC of faith.
      1. First, A – **accept**. You must accept what the Bible says about Jesus as fact. I have summarized for you today the long list of the many thousands who testify about what Jesus did and said. So accept that He is eternal God, that He came to live on earth as a human, that He turned water into wine, that He fed 5000 people from a few bits of bread, that He healed the blind and the lame, that He raised Lazarus from death, and that He died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins and rose again. This is evidence that has been carefully investigated and it is all laid out here in John’s Gospel. So the A of faith is Accept the facts about Jesus!
      2. But then comes the B of faith – **believe**. You must believe that what Jesus did on the cross, He did for you, personally. And this is because accepting facts is not enough. The devil accepts every fact about Jesus; but he does not believe in Jesus as his Saviour. You have to believe the facts about Jesus *in relationship to yourself*. What Jesus did and what Jesus promised *was for me*. *My* sins are forgiven, *I* am a child of God, *I* have the permanent indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, *I* have been delivered from judgment, *I* have eternal life, and *I* have abundant life now! So the B of faith is believe that what Jesus did and what He promised is for *you*.
      3. And lastly, the C of the ABC of faith is **commit**. You must commit yourself to Jesus. And here is what I referred to at the beginning of the sermon when I said that faith in Jesus is not just about a one-off decision in the past, but a way of life. Thomas did not have this one off moment and then go back to whatever he was doing as though nothing had changed. He tried ☺ We are going to see in ch. 21 that Thomas was among a group of seven disciples who went out fishing on the Sea of Tiberias. But Jesus appeared to them there and explained that they had to leave that career behind and become full-time missionaries and church-planters, as we shall see next time. And that is not to say that everyone has to be a missionary or a church planter to truly follow Jesus. What it means is that believing in Jesus will affect your time, your choices, your relationships, your possessions, your language, your thoughts, your money, your attitudes, your desires; everything comes under, and needs to increasingly come under, the Lordship of Jesus. So you join a church and you sit under the preaching of the word and you participate in a Bible study and you do our own Bible reading at home so that every aspect of your life becomes more and more like how the Lord Jesus lived. So the C of faith is commit to following Jesus, every day.

Is that a good description of you? Have you accepted the facts about Jesus, believed that what He did and what He promised is for you, and committed yourself to following Him every day? If so, then know for sure that Jesus calls you blessed and that you have “*life in His name*.” And it just doesn’t get any better than that! Amen.