

Believe: Jesus and the Disciples

SCOTT HOEZEE

At one time or another, we have all heard the saying, “Make one little mistake, and you are labeled for life”. Well, who knows where that expression came from, but if you found out one day it originated with Jesus’ disciple Thomas, you wouldn’t be surprised; because whatever else Thomas did as a disciple and then an apostle, it was the time he did not believe the story that Jesus had risen from the dead that forever labeled him as Doubting Thomas. Well, today on *Groundwork*, we will dig into that story, and a few other things in John 20. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, we are in the third program of a fairly short, four-part series on the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. We looked at the immediate things that happened right after he rose from the dead in Matthew, Luke, and John. We looked in the previous episode at the well-known road to Emmaus story from Luke 24; and now today, we continue with a couple incidents in John 20.

DARRELL DELANEY

We talked about this in the first episode, Scott, where you would expect that there would be so much to write about, and a lot of things that they would say when it came to the resurrection; but, I mean, it is unlike the crucifixion because every gospel has great detail on what happened at the crucifixion, making sure that you knew this is the Savior who died, who suffered for our sins; but in this situation, basically we got the essentials only. We have enough just for the faith, just for us to believe. So, they don’t go into great detail.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No; there just aren’t...forty days Jesus was on the earth, we are told, between the resurrection and the ascension; forty days, but not much there; but a lot of what we do have...most of what we have, actually, comes from the end of John; and in our final episode in this series, the next episode, we are going to look at John 21. Today, we are going to look at a couple things from John 20. So, we will dig into that now, starting at John 20:19, where we read:

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this is actually the evening of the first Easter day here...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, the third day.

DARRELL DELANEY

And they had already gotten reports from Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and these women. It seems like...I mean, at that point they did not believe, really, what those people were saying; and so, they actually had this account where Jesus physically appears to them; and this really was a shock to them, I believe, for them to see Jesus in person and be astonished by his presence in the moment.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; we were told earlier in this chapter that after Mary Magdalene said she had seen Jesus, Peter and John kind of had a footrace to the tomb. They got there, looked in...yes, Jesus wasn't there; and then we are told they just went home, scratching their heads: What's going on? But oddly enough, they didn't seem to go out looking for him after that, either; and now, flash forward a few hours and they are in a room with all the doors locked, out of fear, they said...fear of the Jewish authorities; that they maybe thought they ganged up on Jesus, maybe they were going to gang up on us now, too. So, it is sort of an odd place to find them, having been told twice that he was alive; having seen, for two of them at least, that indeed the tomb was empty; and weirdly enough, all the burial wrappings were neatly folded up, which didn't look like grave robbery; and yet, they are locked in a room, full of fear.

DARRELL DELANEY

Let me ask you a question about that fear, Scott. So, it says that they were in there in fear of the Jewish leaders. Do you think that the Jewish leaders, thinking they stomped out this movement because they had the "founder," Jesus, killed, that they would really be worried about these disciples at that moment? I believe that, if you stomp out the leader, then these other ones are going to scatter. You are not going to have to worry about it, but they were in the room because they were afraid of these Jewish leaders. What do you think about that?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Frederick Buechner, a well-known author and pastor, thinks that they were more afraid of running into Jesus himself, since they had all abandoned him and Peter had denied him three times. They all swore up and down: No, no, no, no; we are going to stay with you; and they just, you know, fled like scared children the moment Jesus got arrested already. Only the women seemed to have shown up most of the...at the cross itself. So, yes; probably there is no evidence that the Jews were after the disciples, because indeed, without Jesus...there were a lot of messianic wannabees back then, and when they rubbed out the leader, everybody else scattered and it was game over; and indeed, that had already started to happen to the disciples, too. So, I don't quite buy that they were afraid of the Jews. Maybe they were afraid of running into Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it is kind of like, you know, Mom and Dad told you to get the chores done before they come home. When they come back, they find that you haven't done the chores; or you see them pulling up and you try to act like you are really busy...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Ha, ha; yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that if they would have been about doing the work that Jesus called them to do, they wouldn't have had a reason to be afraid; but in this situation, I mean, even scripture says that they were scared of these Jewish leaders, but if they were faithful to what God was doing, they wouldn't have had to fear them either.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; but without touching a locked door or without anything opening, Jesus pops into the middle of the room; shalom, he says, peace to you; shows them his scars in his hands and his side; and so, they now know this is the same guy...this is the same man, Jesus, our Master, our Lord, who we watched die three days ago; and so, finally, finally, on that Easter evening, fear gives way to joy. I hope somebody thought later to apologize to Mary Magdalene for not believing her. I don't know whether they did or not, but they did owe her an apology; but this wasn't an easy thing to believe, in their defense.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, I find it very interesting, Scott, that Jesus is identified by his scars; and so, I mean, Isaiah says that he was an unassuming man and that no one should desire him. His appearance was pretty much regular. He would probably have blended into the crowd. He didn't stick out...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, the fact that he has these scars now, they could identify him. Oh, this is the one who had his side pierced; this is the one who had the nails in his hands; this has got to be him. So, they positively identify him by his scars, and those scars remain with him to this day.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; they are the scars of our salvation: He was pierced for our transgressions...you just referred to Isaiah. So, there he is and they believe that it is the same man, and so they are full of joy; but then before this encounter with the risen Jesus is finished, we get, Darrell, kind of a preview of Pentecost. Jesus wishes them shalom, or peace, again; and then we are told he *hhhhh*...he breathes on them the Holy Spirit; and then says: because of this, you have power to forgive sins. If you forgive people's sins, God will; if you don't, God won't. That is the power that I am going to be giving to you by the Holy Spirit; but this isn't Pentecost yet, though, Darrell...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, how do we understand this part of the scene?

DARRELL DELANEY

I heard different teachings on what this means. This is not Pentecost. You see that their behavior...even in the next chapter doesn't show that they have this regenerate behavior or this boldness that they can go and preach. I believe that this was him giving them the authority to forgive sins and to not forgive sins, but also you see in Acts 2 where the full manifestation will come; this is like a coming attraction...it is just like a preview...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

But they will be filled when that happens; but the fact that Jesus is alive and that he gave them authority in this moment, is really what teaches us that ordinary people can do powerful and extraordinary things with this power.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Indeed, they do; and so, we get this little Pentecost preview. It will be fifty days before the Spirit is fully poured out and they get transformed; but for now, we see where the source of their authority is going to be, as you just said, Darrell; but then there is one little detail...a little shoe to drop here that we are going to find out next, and that is that one of the remaining disciples, Thomas, missed the meeting. He wasn't there; and what happens next is what will lead to poor Thomas being forever known as Doubting Thomas, and we will look at that next.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are in John 20 in this third episode of a four-part series looking at some of the very few incidents we have in the Bible of Jesus after he was raised from the dead, and we get a lot of that from John...John 20...and then the next program...the final program...John 21; but Darrell, let's dive right back in and pick up the action at verse 24.

DARRELL DELANEY

All right; it says this: Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." ²⁶A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, see my hands. Reach out your [finger] and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Then Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

SCOTT HOEZEE

I just thought of this when you were reading it, Darrell, that the doors were locked. Now, we were told that a week earlier they were locked out of fear of the Jews; probably they aren't afraid of the Jews anymore, but they still locked the doors. I almost sort of think, you know, it is like when you want to do a magic trick and you want to duplicate the conditions, this is like: Hey, Thomas; Thomas, watch! This is how it was last week. We are going to lock all the doors and then Jesus will pop right in; you'll see! But anyway, Thomas doesn't believe them initially. You know, Darrell, sometimes liberal theologians...people who really doubt or deny that Jesus physically rose from the dead...sometimes you will hear them say that, you know, these disciples two thousand years ago, pre-scientific, pre-modern, they were naïve; they were just bumpkins; they would believe anything. Of course, they would believe somebody could come back from the dead; they were naïve; but that is not true, according to the Bible.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; just two things, Scott, that came up. One was that you just mentioned, that he came in the locked doors, and I love the fact that God is not restricted by locked doors or locked hearts.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

He can appear in those different, powerful places; and then the second thing you just said about liberal theologians is kind of a modernist thought, where logic and reason are king; and if you cannot figure your way there or pragmatically, empirically get your way there...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Then it doesn't make any sense; and so, because we thought we were more sophisticated than these Bible people...I mean, everybody knows dead people don't come back.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

You don't need any science to teach you that. You don't need...you just...Grandma is not here anymore. So, it doesn't mean that they were easily, naively manipulated because they didn't believe. It just means that they have brains and they are using them. You don't need science to understand that thought.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; you cannot blame Thomas. I probably wouldn't have believed it either, Darrell, if I had been there, and maybe you wouldn't have either. This is a weird story. Somebody back from the dead. They knew that Jesus was dead as a doornail. People don't survive crucifixions; Jesus sure didn't. He had been embalmed and buried, and that is it. So, they say: No, Thomas, really; he's back! And Thomas says: Right; yes, fine. I tell you what. If I run into Jesus and see his scars, I will believe. In fact, tell you what...so, he kind of keeps moving it up to the next level...tell you what. If I can stick my fingers in the nail holes and stick my whole hand in the side where the sword pierced him, then I will believe; otherwise, guys, no dice. I am not going to believe you!

DARRELL DELANEY

So, I mean, I love the fact that Thomas is looking for hard evidence. I think we come down on Thomas a little too tough...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Man, he wanted some proof. Who doesn't want proof? Who has never said to God: Can you prove this? Or said to their Christian friend: Can you give me some evidence for this? So, he wants to engage his mind. He wants to understand, and he wants exactly what he needs to help his faith to be complete and to be healthy so that he can understand what God is doing. So, I don't think it is a problem that he doubted in that situation. He just wanted some more proof.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, we believe in the power of prayer. We believe God can and does work miracles; and yet, every once in a while, we hear a story at church and they will say: Oh, remember Marge? She was in the hospital and the doctors said she would be dead in a day? Totally healed! Totally healed; they have no explanation. You know, you sort of think, well, that is great; but deep down, you say: Really? Maybe it is just a coincidence. You know, maybe the doctors were wrong. I mean, we don't believe miracles that easy, even today. So, you cannot blame Thomas. So, he missed the meeting; they tell him about it; he says no, no way, not until I see him and can poke my fingers in his nail holes. Flash forward one week; again, same thing; doors locked, Thomas is there; Jesus shows up and says: Okay, Thomas; here you go; poke away. You know, stick your fingers here; do whatever you want. I am here for you. But now Thomas doesn't want to do that all of a sudden.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love how Jesus gives Thomas exactly what he needs in order for his faith to grow. I believe that the fact that Jesus was willing to show him exactly what he needed, that was enough for Thomas. He is like: Okay, my Lord and my God. I am going to make a confession right here because I can understand it. There is nothing to hide, there is no conspiracy, there is nothing secret going on. Even though Jesus has given him exactly what he needs, he doesn't need to touch it; because the scripture doesn't say he did put his hand in there...

SCOTT HOEZEE

No, he didn't, no.

DARRELL DELANEY

The scripture says he confessed right after that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Seeing is believing, as they say, and that is what Jesus says to him next: Well Thomas, I am standing right here. I am casting a shadow. I am warm. I am alive. You can poke me if you want. But, you know, there are going to be a lot of people in the future, Thomas, who are not going to have your advantage, and they are going to believe, too. So, I want to speak a special blessing: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes; so, that is us, right?

SCOTT HOEZEE

That's us.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is where we actually make a sneak preview into the scripture. There is another place where we make a sneak preview into the scripture, and it is in John 17, where Jesus says: (verse 20 paraphrased) And those who come to believe through the message of the disciples, I pray for them. So, I told my kids, just like your mom told you, that is us in the Bible. God is including us right there. Blessed are those who don't see, because we haven't seen physically Jesus—we haven't seen him, but we still believe in the message.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; yes, lots of people have read this; and again, you know, we read it as devotions at the table, and you know, Mom and Dad said: Jesus means us; and I thought: Cool; I'm in the Bible. Then a few years later I thought that was a childish thought. I am not really in the Bible; and then I got a little older still and got into college and seminary and it was like, I came back to where I was as a kid. Yes, you and I are in the Bible, Darrell; and that is great because what that points to, Darrell, is that the only reason we believe in Jesus today, even though we haven't seen him...we didn't even have a chance to see his nail holes or poke our fingers into him...but we have faith; and if we have faith, it is because we have been given a great gift; the gift of faith by the Holy Spirit; and you know what, Darrell? Without that gift, we would all be Doubting Thomas. I would be Doubting Scott, you would be Doubting Darrell. We would have Doubting Susan, Doubting Betty. Without faith...the gift of faith...we would not be able to believe; but with that great gift, we are.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is beautiful because we need that faith gift in order to give us hope in this world that has a lot of bad things happening. It gives us the hope we need to know that God is going to not only set things straight, but give us the peace we need in the middle of the problem, and that is powerful. I know that John has one final thing that he would like to say at the end of this chapter, and as we wrap up this program, we want to make sure that we can let you know what God is saying there for his disciples today; so, stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

John has one last thing to say to us in John Chapter 20...two verses...and as we are going to see, there is a slightly different version of the exact same thing at the end of John 21, but here are the last two verses of John 20:30 and 31. John writes:

³⁰Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when you read that, I was thinking about, as a young Christian, what are those things? I want the books...I want the other signs...I want everything...I want the exhaustive version of this; but it seems that John really didn't focus on all the things...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

He just basically reported the good news that we needed to know for our faith to grow, and that is really powerful. They all have an agenda, I think, that each disciple...each gospel...has a particular span, a particular point that they wanted to emphasize, and John's is right here. He wants us to believe.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That's it, yes; you know, when you go to seminary one of the first things you learn is what is the nature of a gospel? What is a gospel? And one of the things you learn is that it is not a biography of Jesus, right? It is not an academic history of Jesus; biographies and academic histories try to be exhaustive; they try to cover everything about a person's life. This is also not an encyclopedia of every last detail about Jesus. It is not a diary or a journal or a newspaper account that was written as the events of Jesus unfolded. No; a gospel has an agenda, as you just said, Darrell. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, they all had an agenda. They were unapologetically grinding an axe. They included what they did; they edited, they shaped, they moved stuff around; they deleted some stuff, included other stuff, so that we would believe. One simple goal: I am including just enough to let you become a disciple.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this is a reporting of good news.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when you watch the news and they give you a report and say: This is just in; they are not going to give you every single detail of it. So, I like documentaries, and documentaries try to give you everything...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is not a documentary; this is a reporting of good news; and even though it was a few years after Jesus' death, these were the essential things they wanted to make sure that you knew so that you could believe, and that is really powerful that John...Matthew, Mark and Luke...they all put together their gospel in a specific way so that you would know and you would believe.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and so, if somebody had come up to John years ago and said: Hey, John; you didn't include any of Jesus' parables. You know, Matthew, Mark and Luke...they've got about thirty-six parables...you didn't include any parables...why not? And John would have said: Because I didn't think I needed them. They were already in the other gospels, so I included other stuff that I thought would be helpful to make you believe; and that is important. There is an interesting thing, Darrell, in this verse...verse 31: So that...John says, I included what I did so that you may believe; but the Greek there is just a little ambiguous, or it can be read two different ways. There is another sense in which you could translate John as saying: Not only so that you *may* believe, but so that you may *keep on* believing...you can keep on believing.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the *i-n-g* is very interesting in Greek because it is a present continuous...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you are supposed to keep on going. It is like your lifestyle, it is like your steps, it is like your everyday walk with Christ. It is not just one incident. There is a particular verb for the crucifixion because it is one done for all...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But there is also one for believing, and that is a lifestyle, that as a believer we are supposed to do that all the time, every day, and I think that is what John is hinting at with the ambiguous verb he is using for *keep on believing* here.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, it is interesting, too, that John is the gospel, as I recall...I think I am recalling this correctly...John is the gospel where whatever you read that, you know, somebody...Jesus says believe in me...it is not really *in*, it is *into*...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Believe into me; and *into* also has that sense of ongoing, continuous present, as you said.

Ongoing...believing is not a one and done thing, right? Believing is every day; every day you get up and you have to keep on believing; and that is not easy. You know, you watch the news when you get out of bed in the morning; every day, the news of the day seems calculated almost to knock the stuffing out of your faith. This is not an easy world to believe that there is a Messiah who is ruling it as Lord.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's true. When I think of the Lord's Prayer, where it says: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; if that place where that kingdom has not come, to me it is a faith statement for you to say that. It takes the faith that he gave us to sustain and believe through the things where the kingdom is not showing up...where there is a lot of war, where there is a lot of pain, where there is a lot of death—a lot of sickness; that is the place where the kingdom isn't there yet, and that means we need to continue to live and pray in faith in order to allow God to show us how we can speak into that situation, how we can be change agents in that situation; but it is a faith statement to say thy kingdom come when you see the kingdom is not fully manifested in a place, and that is the gift of faith we need.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; yes, we have been talking about Doubting Thomas in this episode, Darrell; and even being a Doubting Thomas, that can ebb and flow a little bit in our lives. There are times that things knock us off kilter...knock us off stride in our walk of discipleship; and we have become kind of Doubting Thomas all over again for a season; but thanks be to God, he keeps sending that Spirit, he keeps sending us the gift of faith to renew our faith when it flags, to reassure us in the truth of the gospel when we are in a season of doubt. That is just a fantastic gift!

DARRELL DELANEY

And we need that gift each and every day. We need to ask the Lord to continue to keep filling us with the hope that comes from the power of his Holy Spirit to help us believe; but then, we see that...I mean, it is a down payment on that when Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples when he comes back to them; and we need that breath each and every day; we need that breath each and every moment of our lives...when we feel hopeless, when we see other people feeling hopeless, we can have the faith to believe in Jesus. Even though we have not seen him, we still believe, thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we conclude our study of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances by examining his interactions with Peter and the other disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee as we find it in John 21.

Connect with us now at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you, or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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