

## Sermon 14/5/23 – Encounters in John: Thomas (PK)

### John 20: 19-31

I've noticed... I don't know whether you've noticed it too... I've noticed that *kings* have been in the news a lot lately. So let me ask you this question: Who is your king? To whom is your loyalty? Does your king come with regiments and gun carriages and a mighty army? With a gilded coach? With a diamond-encrusted crown?

Here in the Gospel according to John we have before us one of the most important documents in the world because it shows us our true King. It's right here in the last verse of our reading. This Jesus is the long-awaited true heir to the throne. John doesn't define the word 'Christ' because it was a well-known term at the time. We've added a lot of religious freight to it, but it simply means 'the Anointed One', the true heir to the throne.

The Gospel according to John shows us that *Jesus* is the true King. And more than that he is the Son of God. This Jesus who washes the feet of his followers. This Jesus whose commandment is 'love one another'. This Jesus who dies a criminal's death outside Jerusalem. This Jesus is the true King. The very Son of God. The king over all the Earth.

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But wait. Surely this can't be right! This man who died a criminal's death is the true King? Why would *anyone* think that?

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Well, what does John say? John is an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' life, arguably the closest eyewitness. He is the one who lent up against Jesus at the last supper. He was in the courtyard with Peter after Jesus' arrest, at the cross when he died. He saw the flow of blood and water when the soldiers pierced Jesus' side, showing he was really dead. He turns to us and says 'I saw this'. At the empty tomb, and now here behind locked doors in Jerusalem.

This Gospel account is carefully and intricately written, with great literary skill. But it is most importantly an eyewitness account of these events.

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To show that Jesus is the true King, John focuses on just seven of the many signs he did. Our passage this morning deals with the last and greatest of these signs. Here we have the eyewitness account of Jesus' meeting with his disciples after his resurrection.

Typical of John's account he is specific on where and when. It is the Sunday. It is evening. They're in the house where they had met. Jesus once truly dead and buried, came and stood among them (verses 19 and 20).

He showed them his hands and his side. The disciples respond with joy, and he breathes on them the Holy Spirit, commissioning them for the work they have to do.

We ought not to need more. Yet for our benefit John includes the account of Thomas. Thomas, who – happily for us – was not there. Thomas, who – like us – demands to see the evidence. We are not in a position ourselves to put our hands in Jesus' side or our fingers in the holes in his hands. We cannot be.

But Thomas demands the evidence for us:

*'Unless (verse 25) I see the mark of the nail in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'*

How like us.

He demands it for us, that we too may hear with him the words of Jesus (verse 27):

*'Put your finger here and see my hands'  
'Reach out your hand and put it in my side'  
'Do not doubt but believe'*

*'Put your finger here and see my hands'  
'Reach out your hand and put it in my side'  
'Do not doubt but believe'*

Here then is the last and greatest sign. Jesus, three days earlier truly dead and buried, now truly is raised. Thomas can only say but 'My Lord and My God'

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*'These signs are written' says John 'that you may believe that Jesus is the true King, the Son of God.'*

It is not on the basis of fine robes, or of the command of regiments; a gilded carriage or a great cathedral, that we say that this Jesus is our King. No, it is on the basis of the seven signs.

It is on the basis that Jesus, once dead, is raised to life. It is on this basis that we say that Jesus is the king, the very Son of God, king of all the Earth.

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*'These signs are written' says John 'that through believing you may have life in his name.'*

Jesus stands before us, the One who washes his disciples' feet, the One whose commandment is to love one another, the One whose way passes through the suffering of the cross. This Jesus the true King, who bears the marks on his hands and in his side, stands before us to say:

- Believe and do not doubt
- Trust in me
- Be loyal to me
- Commit yourself to my way
- Believe and do not doubt

Incredibly, as we turn to him, we receive life; life won for us in His atoning sacrifice on the cross, life won for us in his resurrection from the dead. As we turn to him, we receive life.

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Friends, many others demand our loyalty, many others demand our trust, many others demand that we follow their way. But they do not bring life.

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Our politicians ask us to believe in continuous economic growth, to believe in power and might, to believe in technology. But they do not bring life. Have you seen the mess we're in? Are we not desperately in need of the true king?

Advertisers ask us to believe in branded clothing, Sunday supplements to believe in the perfect life, our society to believe in ever more stuff. But they do not bring life.

Are we not desperately in need of the true king? From home, to work-place, to city, to nature, from our own brokenness, to relationship breakdown, to climate breakdown, are we not desperately in need of the true king of all the Earth?

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So, friends, with kings so much in the news: Who is your King? To whom is your loyalty? Here is John's eyewitness account. These signs are written that you may believe that this Jesus is the true King, the Son of God. This Jesus who serves, this Jesus whose way is love, this Jesus whose crown is of thorns and whose throne a cross. This Jesus who brings life, this Jesus is the true King.

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See with Thomas, Jesus' hands and side, Jesus truly dead and buried truly is raised

*Put your finger here and see my hands, reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.*

This Jesus stands before us and holds out life.

*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.*

AMEN