

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

No! Really?

Sometimes that question has been posed to me in genuine wonderment and curiosity – as in , tell me more!

But more often, it has been asked with a measure of snark – with mocking sarcasm.

This is nothing new.

Rumors began almost immediately – the disciples took him away to make it look like a resurrection.

He didn't really die – he just fainted and then was buried alive, woke up, and walked out of the tomb.

The disciples were hallucinating.

The earthquake shook the tomb and Jesus' body fell into a crevice and then was covered up again, never to be found.

My first encounter with skepticism was as an undergrad student in Germany. Among the student community I lived with, I was the only practicing Christian. The others were either nominal Christians with no interest in living in faith, or avowed atheists and agnostics.

One of the most compelling questions my friend and atheist Siegfried asked was “what difference would it make to you if the resurrection of Jesus were proved false?”

I think I answered something along the lines of

“Well, even if it turns out there is no Christ and no eternity,

I believe that I and the world are better because I have lived as though there were.”

The devil chimes in with – “But why bother?” and sometimes, I confess, I give in.

But the question of how we might live if we knew the resurrection were false is not the question the Bible raises for us today.

Instead, it strikes me that Thomas flips this question around

– **“How would your life be different if the resurrection were proved true?”**

When his friends shared their WOWs of having seen the risen Jesus, Thomas responded skeptically, “really? I can’t believe that unless...”

For Thomas, It is not enough that the tomb was empty – a lot of things could explain that.

For him, it isn’t enough that the women had come back with a fantastic tale.

He has to know it for himself

– **and to know it means to see it and touch it.**

But there is more to Thomas’ quest for the truth of Jesus’ resurrection.

It is not enough that what he sees and touches looks and feels as a live person should;

Thomas must know that it is *Jesus* who lives beyond the grave.

- Jesus, the craftsman from Nazareth
- Jesus, the Master and Teacher
- Jesus, who shared the Passover with him
 - as the sacrificial lamb
 - whose flesh and blood they were to share from then on in remembrance of him.
- Jesus, the King of the Jews who was hung on a cross just last week
- Jesus, the Lord he had loved and followed.

And to be convinced of this truth, Thomas needs the person he sees and touches to be two things:

- 1. Wounded in all the right places, and**
- 2. Someone who knows him intimately.**

So it is that Jesus comes in recognizable form,

shows his wounds,

and then turns to Thomas knowing what he had said to the others the week before.

“Put your fingers in the wounds of my hands – put your hand in my side. Be not faithless but believing.”

In that moment, Thomas' question, "Really?" is transformed into the exclamation, "Really!" "My Lord and my God!"

... Thomas the skeptic becomes Thomas the Confessor.

That is transformation!

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So let's go back to the questions:

1. Are you convinced that Jesus is truly risen from the dead?
2. If not, what would it take for you to believe it?
3. If so, **"How is your life different because it is true?"**

Turn to those around you and talk about these questions.

Although The Bible tells us little about the apostles after Pentecost, it is likely that Thomas made his way to India, where the St. Thomas Christian Community is still very strong.

C.S. Lewis, whose life as an atheist was transformed into a life of faith, says this:

Quote: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen — not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance, the only thing it cannot be is moderately important."

Quote: "When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world."

Today we not only see the risen Lord Jesus as we look around at one another, members of the body of Christ,

But we also touch him as he gives us his own body and blood for us to eat and drink.

Here at the risen Lord's invitation, we get to put our fingers in the wounds of his hands and put our hands in his side.

Here we see the blood and water being poured out for us and his body given for the nourishment and salvation of our lives.

We hear him say to us – “I am for you, for the forgiveness of your sins. Be not faithless, but believing.”

Come, Holy Spirit, and transforms us. Make our lives this week to be “Really!” lives.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Amen

