

The Courage of Despair

Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples,
“Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

John 11:16 (NIV)

Every pastor knows that there are anxious souls in their congregation who have difficulty rejoicing in their faith.

Thomas—one of the twelve apostles—was just such a person. He's bluntly honest in his doubts and despair, and likely voices the confusion of some of the other apostles. We give him full marks for speaking up (and stating his confusion and concern) when we read about him in the Gospel of John. Yet there's a note of sadness in the fact that his joy in Christ is dulled by a determination to always look on the dark side.

“When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.” “No, we don't know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:3-5 NLT)

In the first of our encounters with Thomas, we read of the Lord's determination to return to Judea, where the Jewish leaders had recently

sought to kill Him. Of course, this horrified the Twelve Apostles and Judas is the one who speaks up when Jesus insists they do what He's planned.

Our verse for today is Thomas confirming his doubts and pessimism of the decision. But we also hear his apparent willingness to die with Jesus.

We know that in a few weeks time (when push turns to shove), in Gethsemane, Thomas's faith truly falters and he forsakes Jesus. He, like all the others, run for safety when Jesus is arrested.

Perhaps you have a personality like Thomas, always seeing the dark side of life, or possibly the present problem has torn down your joyful faith in the Lord. You may feel bankrupt and altogether too tired in the daily battle.

You may wonder where your former enthusiasm for Jesus has gone. You may even doubt that you are converted to faith in Christ. Don't give up at such a dark moment.

All truly honest followers of Christ admit to times of doubt and despair. See the tender scene of our Lord with doubting Thomas in John 20:27-29 and receive fresh encouragement.

“Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe! “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.” (NLT)

Ask the Resurrected One to visit you in your dilemma and minister grace as He did to doubting Thomas. He is ever the same and loves to make Himself known to the anxious doubter.

“Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.”
Oswald Chambers

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