



Unbound

Sermon Growth Guide

March 12, 2023

My All for Jesus

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John 11:11-16 (ESV)

Key Verse: John 11:16 (ESV) So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Big Idea: Following Jesus leads to death, but it's a death which leads to life in Him.



Foundations

We are in our Lenten series, **Unbound**.

This week we focus in on the disciple, Thomas. Most of us are better acquainted with Thomas' words after the resurrection when he insisted that he needed to "see" Jesus in order to believe that he had been raised from the dead (John 20:24-25). He is widely known as "doubting Thomas" because of these words. But in this story, we get another glimpse into Thomas' heart.

Lazarus and his sisters live in Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem. We learn from John 11:8 that the disciples are quite aware of the dangers of traveling to (or near) Jerusalem. Jesus had been nearly stoned the last time He was there. Is there really a good reason to return to danger?

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is very clear that He does only what the Father shows Him: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (5:19). Jesus will go to Bethany. He will head into danger because the Father is showing Him the way.

In this moment, Thomas glimpses his bigger purpose, and boldly proclaims that he is with Jesus to the end.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read John 11:11-16.

What do you observe about the disciples in this passage?

Discuss Thomas' response to Jesus in verse 16. Where is his faith in this moment?

Applying God's Word

As you reflect on Thomas' bold proclamation to follow Jesus into dangerous territory, share a time when you knew following Jesus was going to cost you dearly. What about today? Where is Jesus inviting you to follow Him today?

Witnessing God's Word

Luke 9:23-24: Then [Jesus] said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it."

Following Jesus is a call to die to ourselves. But the story of Lazarus shows us what Jesus is capable of: raising the dead to life. Take some time to pray together for people in your life who do not yet know the power of Jesus in their life.

When I was 12, I begged my parents to send me to Space Camp in Alabama. There was a movie in the 80s about kids at Space Camp accidentally running a Space Shuttle mission, and that's what I wanted to do. So, I went. They had a swarm of kids that year and we were housed in a warehouse with cement floors on bunk beds with a central bathroom. I think there were a hundred boys in my bunk warehouse. They turned the lights out at 10, and it was dark! Really dark. But I had a Duncan Butterfly yo-yo that lit up when you sent it. The first night, I got up from bed and used my yo-yo to light my way to the bathroom. Zoom. Zoom. It was pretty cool! The second night I got up to do it again. Zoom. Zoom. But the rope slipped off my finger. Zoom. Zoom. Crash! The plastic bits scattered across the cement floor. A hundred boys erupted in laughter at once. For the rest of camp it was, "You're that yo-yo boy, right?" Yeah. I do other stuff.

Today we look at Thomas. What's Thomas' nickname? Doubting Thomas. Here's a tip, when you get to heaven and meet Thomas, don't call him that. Sometimes we get famous in all the wrong ways. Our worst moments become our reputation. Jesus has a new identity for us. For the next three weeks, we are going to see reputations change. Thomas, Martha and Mary, three people we think we know, three reputations set in stone. But do we really know their story? They get **Unbound** as we look at how their life unfolded before Jesus. Thomas, doubting Thomas, was willing to give his life. He stood up to say, **My All for Jesus**.

There is nothing so freeing as finding your purpose, nothing more liberating than finding that cause you would give your life for. The opposite of that is living with no purpose. Do you feel that way sometimes? Do you know

people who live for no purpose, to no end, only making a paycheck, or not, just moving on to the next meaningless exercise in entertainment or self-gratification? It gets pretty dark, pretty quick. The field of positive psychology puts out a lot of studies like the World Happiness Report. They typically agree that pursuing self-interest does not make us happy; serving others does. Amassing wealth does not make us happy; being generous does. Living for our own gratification does not satisfy us; purpose does, meaning does, sacrifice does. Sounds a lot like Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount to me. Mark Twain said, "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why." In 2018, Chadwick Boseman delivered the commencement at Howard University and said, above all, find your purpose. "Purpose is an essential element of you. It is the reason you are on the planet at this particular time." Purpose. Do you have one?



Thomas caught a glimpse of his purpose in this moment with Jesus. Lazarus, Jesus' good friend, got sick and died while Jesus stayed where he was two more days. Everybody was trying to figure out why Jesus didn't rush to his aid. Jesus compared Lazarus' death to sleep. Why? Because Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus again and that He has the power to make death itself feckless and innocuous as taking a nap. But nobody around Jesus really got that

yet. So, here's where we pick up. "After saying these things, he said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him'" (John 11:11). That doesn't seem like a good enough reason to go back to Jerusalem. Bethany is a Jerusalem suburb. Things are bad in Jerusalem. Look at verse 8: "The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?'" (John 11:8). Getting rocks thrown at you is uncomfortable. Actually, it's life threatening. A napping friend is no reason to risk it. "The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.' Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep" (John 11:12-13).

Finally, the penny drops. "Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him'" (John 11:14-15). Jesus knows this is no small thing. This is life and death. Jesus knows this is not a nap. He is going to demonstrate that He is worthy of following, even at risk of life and death. Jesus knows this is a moment to foreshadow His own victory over death when He will rise again from the tomb on Easter morning. Jesus is the only one worthy of trusting with your life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died as a leader of the Christian resistance to the Nazi takeover of the churches in Germany, famously said, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." Jesus is the only one who can issue that call and back it up. "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it" (Luke 9:23-24). That's quite a claim. Can I trust Jesus with my life? Can I rest my whole life confidently on Jesus? If I give my life for Him, as Bonhoeffer eventually did,

will He keep it in the end for eternal life? Can I give my all for Jesus?

Thomas did. "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). "Jesus, if you go back there, they will stone you. You will die." Thomas is the one to say, "I stand with you. Let's stand with Jesus. If we die, we die." In that moment, Thomas bundled up everything it meant to be Thomas, all his hopes, all his ambitions, all his experiences and relationships and expectations and ambitions, he wrapped them all up in one little bundle and laid them down at the feet of Jesus. My all for Him.

"Didymus" means twin. Actually, so does "Thomas." Thomas stood strong. But what is he most famous for? He's most famous for that moment after the resurrection when he asked to see the wounds on Jesus' hands and feet. "Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So 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'" (John 20:24-25). This passage always comes up the Sunday after Easter. As an associate pastor, I think I preached it three times! Doubting Thomas. Unless I see, I will not believe. Seeing is believing. Or, do you have to believe in order to see?

Doubt is no sin. Sometimes when we have doubts, we think of ourselves as lesser Christians. We compare ourselves to the confident and assured Christians (as they so appear) and think we are falling behind because in our heart of hearts, we doubt. Doubt itself is no sin. It can be an occasion to sin if you let it. Or it

can be an occasion to pursue the Lord with greater faithfulness, to be honest with your questions and to humbly pursue honest answers, and to commit yourself once again to Jesus the Person, the Savior, the Lord, as you hammer out your intellectual questions and doubts. Doubt is no sin. Thomas, when Jesus said he could touch his wounds if he wished (it doesn't say he did, by the way, but that Jesus said he could if he wished), Thomas made a great confession of faith: "[Jesus] said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:27-28). Here in our passage, he is the only one to speak up. I stand with Jesus. Let's stand with Jesus. Even if I die.

Today, we ordain and install our Elders and Deacons. Each year, we nominate a class of Elders and Deacons to take up three years of leadership. We have no self-appointed leadership at this church. There are lots of bodies, lots of places where people gather around a charismatic Christian teacher who operates in full independence, zero accountability. Sometimes that works out great! Our school of thought is a little more circumspect. Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Spiritual power gone wrong does deep damage. The Bible presents two offices of leadership: Elder and Deacon. Pastors are Teaching Elders. Deacons are devoted to service, and Elders to teaching and governance. For us, here in Colorado Springs, it is a celebration. Looking at our passage, I have to ask, what if it cost you everything? What if to be named an Elder today meant waking up tomorrow on a national registry of illegal Christians? What if being found on a list of Deacons meant being targeted by the Chinese Communist Party or the KGB...or the FBI? What

if saying yes to serving Jesus and His church meant a North Korean prison, or finding your business shut down, protested or burned? What if it cost everything? Would you stand with Jesus?

It does cost everything to stand with Jesus. Even here. Even now. You don't just dip in and try it. Jesus says take up your cross. Jesus says give me your life. Jesus says, leave everything and follow me. Thomas, church history and legend tell us, went on to be a missionary to India. When the apostles scattered from persecution in Jerusalem, Thomas went east. When Vasco da Gama's fleet reached the shores of India in 1498, assuming they were the first Christians to set foot, they were met with Christians. How did you guys get here? They told them of Thomas the Apostle. There is little doubt this is true. Thomas started planting the church in India as early as 52 AD. He told them about Jesus, who He was, what He had done, and that they could know Him if they would give their life to Him. They did. Many converted. According to legend, Thomas got crossways with the Hindu priests of Kali, and was attacked, but kept preaching. Then he converted the wife and son of a king named King Mizdai, who in return ordered Thomas taken out of the city and killed. Four soldiers ran him through with spears from four sides. When you see Thomas...

Why should I give my life to Jesus? Why should I surrender myself to Him, give Him my agency, my autonomy, bend my knee before Him and call Him my Savior, say to Him "My Lord and my God"? Why? Why did Thomas? Jesus is worthy of giving your life. He isn't just a figure in history. He isn't just an idea. He is a person, and He is God. Jesus is the Son of God, come down from heaven, who gave His life for you.