



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 5/4-5/19

“Undeniable - Thomas”

John 20:24-29 (NIV)

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.” A 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!” Then he 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!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Over the weekend we learned about Thomas and his doubt of the resurrection. Though Thomas’s doubt often gets framed as a character flaw, it is his doubt that leads to an encounter with the risen Jesus. Thomas saw Jesus and then believed. This week in the devotions we will look at various characters that struggled with doubt. In their doubt, they were led to see God and were able to believe. And remember, when you read these devotions you aren’t doing them alone. Many members of our congregation are reading these. You might consider sharing them with a friend. Let’s use this week to learn, pray and grow together.

- Pastor Britton

Family Activity: This week we will do a quick science experiment that I have done with my own kids. The experiment will inflate a balloon through a chemical reaction. You will need a plastic bottle like an empty 2 liter or bottle of water, a balloon, baking soda and vinegar. Here’s the setup.

1. Fill the deflated balloon with 1/3 cup of baking soda.
2. Pour 1 cup of vinegar into the bottle.
3. Attach the balloon over the mouth of the bottle. The baking soda will fall into the vinegar and the balloon will inflate.

Before you do the experiment, ask your kids if they know what will happen. After the experiment, tell your kids how the balloon inflated even though the gas is invisible. We still see the evidence of the gas that lets us know it is there. Tell your kids that God is a lot like that. We have evidence of God around us. Discuss how you have seen evidence of God around you as a family. Additional details of the experiment can be found here: <https://onelittleproject.com/baking-soda-and-vinegar-balloons/>.

Monday, 5/6/19

“Let Go of Your Ego”

John 20:24-25 (NIV)

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.”

- Let's set the scene a bit. We find Thomas surrounded by other disciples who claim to have seen the Lord. Thomas scoffs at the idea and says, “Until I put my finger in the holes of his hands and side, I won't believe it!” I want to focus on the word “my.” It comes from the Greek word *ego*. Thomas's ego prevents him from hearing the good news that Christ is risen. Are there ways your ego has gotten in the way of experiencing God?
- Thomas dismissed the testimony of some of his close friends. It's hard to listen to words of advice from the people close to us. However, it's the people that know us best that we should be able to have an open conversation with. If we can speak freely and listen to one another, it might save us from pain later in life. Is there someone you have dismissed because of your ego? Is there someone you should thank for their kind words?

Prayer: Almighty God, we exalt you because of the way you humbled yourself. You are holy, righteous and perfect. You set aside your own ego, became flesh, and gave your life for us. May we follow the example. Help us to die to ourselves so we can live for you! Amen.

Tuesday, 5/7/19

“You Can't Be Serious?!?!”

Genesis 17:17-18 (NIV)

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

- Here we find Abraham at an old age who receives a strange promise from God. God tells Abraham he will have a child with Sarah. In total disbelief, Abraham laughs. Laughter is the response we give when it's so outrageous we give it no consideration. God, though, had plans for Abraham and Sarah who would eventually have a son named Isaac. The promise of God during the Easter season is new life no matter the situation. Does it seem strange that God offers the promise of new life to you? What would that even look like in your life?
- After the laugh, Abraham tries to control the situation. Abraham believes that Ishmael (Abraham's son with Hagar his concubine) should receive God's blessing. This makes perfect sense because Abraham already has a son Ishmael, why can't God just use him? Like Abraham, we often fall into this trap. When we lose hope, we lean on our own ability to control the situation rather than rest in the promise of God. Sometimes we can't solve whatever is happening. Sometimes we must believe in a day that will be better, not because of the things we do, but because of the things God is doing on our behalf. What things are you trying to control that you could bring to God in prayer?

Prayer: God, you are worthy of our praise because of the promises you make and keep on our behalf. You always follow through and never fail us. Gives us the eyes to see you working in our midst and the courage to trust in your promises. Amen.

Wednesday, 5/8/19

“God Helps Our Doubt”

Mark 9:21-24 (NIV)

Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

- Doubt is something we all experience in life. The man in this story is no exception. Exhausted from years of parenting and looking for answers for his ill son, he approaches Jesus. He urges Jesus, “If you can ... ” Pause right there. The very nature of this question shows doubt. It’s not that he doesn’t believe Jesus can heal his son. He just isn’t sure. That’s what doubt is. It makes us unsure. Jesus doesn’t turn this man away in his doubt. The man is still welcome in Jesus’ presence. Doubt is an opportunity for us to encounter the healing of Jesus. What things are you unsure of in life right now?
- The man’s response to Jesus is fascinating. At first, he exclaims, “I do believe!” Then he backpedals. “Do I believe? Jesus, help me overcome my unbelief!” Guess what Jesus did next? Jesus healed the man’s son. Jesus helped the man’s disbelief through the restoration of his son. God helps us even when we doubt. Signs of healing and restoration are all around us. What signs of God’s healing and restoration have you witnessed in your life or in the life of others? How could you share these stories to help others with their unbelief?

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes and let my ears be attuned to the way you are restoring my own life and the lives of those around me. When I am experiencing unbelief, may I turn to you in prayer. Thank you for welcoming me in my doubt. Thank you for always helping. Amen.

Thursday, 5/9/19

“Signs and Wonders”

Daniel 6:25-27 (NIV)

Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: “May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”

- King Darius is not a Christian. He’s not a Jew. He’s not an Israelite. Yet, he worshipped God in this passage because he saw God’s work. He saw God protect Daniel from a night in the lions’ den. Darius didn’t literally see God. He saw the signs and wonders of God. I’m convinced God’s signs and wonders are all around us. I’m also convinced that sometimes we mischaracterize God’s signs and wonders. We think it must be something grand to come from God, but God is in small moments too. How do you see signs and wonders of God in the small, everyday moments?
- Darius responds to the signs and wonders of God by worshipping God. He speaks of God’s power that will endure forever. He clearly names God as the power that saved Daniel. When we see a small sign or wonder of God, we should respond similarly. We should respond through worship. We should name what God has done. Find a notebook or use the voice memo app on your phone. Record a small sign or wonder from God.

Prayer: God, the evidence of your power is all around us in the big things and in the small things. Make me aware of the little signs and wonders that happen every day. Let me use that as a reminder to worship you. Amen.

Friday, 5/10/19

“Gripes and Grumbles”

Exodus 16:9-12 (NIV)

Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’” While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud. The LORD said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”

- Exodus 16 is a fascinating story about God providing for the Israelites while they roamed in the desert. The Israelites have grown weary of the journey. They are tired and hungry. They complain to Moses and Aaron. God hears them and promises to rain down bread from heaven to sustain them. More than that, God offers them meat. God hears our grumbling and does something beautiful with it. God acts. God provides. What gripes and grumbles do you have today? Send them to God!
- What’s strange about the Israelites is they continued to gripe and grumble. They failed to see that God had led them out of slavery in Egypt. They forgot that God provided for them day after day. Maybe that’s not so strange after all. Maybe that’s what we do. When we forget about the things God has done, it leads to gripes and grumbles. Think of grumbles as separation from God. When we grumble against God and others, we separate ourselves from the love of God. What things do you have in your life to be thankful for? How might remembering those things turn your gripes and grumbles into praise?

Prayer: God, we know we often make a mess of things. We forget the amazing things you have done for us. We focus on the things we don’t have that disconnect us from you. We don’t want that. Forgive us. Take all our gripes and grumbles and turn them into joyous praise. Amen.

***This week’s devotional was written by
Pastor Britton Fields (bfields@plattewoodschurch.org).***