

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
April 7, 2013**

John 20:24-31

Does Christianity Demand Blind Faith?

- 1. Often this seems to be true**
- 2. This was not true in the case of Thomas**
- 3. This is not expected of us**

Hymns: 145 – 265 – 165 – 149 -- 144

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Blind faith. How would you define blind faith? I think a good definition of blind faith can be found in the Heaven's Gate cult (1997). These are the people that believed an alien space ship was following the hal-bop comet – and this space ship would catapult them into a better existence. So they committed suicide – because they didn't know how long the space ship would be around. That is blind faith. They had no proof of a space ship behind the comet. There were no facts to support any of what they believed. They went solely on the word of their leader.

Many people view Christianity the same way. It is all based on blind faith. There is no proof, they say, of anything that we believe. We Christians just blindly follow Jesus in whatever He says. We Christians, they say, are just like the Heaven's Gate cult. Is that true? Is the resurrection that we Christians celebrate so much in just blind faith? Is that why our church wasn't overflowing with people on Easter Sunday? Do people think that faith in Jesus is like any other religion – it's all blind faith?

Our reading for this morning addresses this question: Does Christianity demand blind faith? We will see that this often seems to be true. But we can praise God that it was not true in the case of Thomas. We can also praise God that blind faith is not expected of us, either.

Verse 29 of our text says, ***blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*** Jesus is saying that those who did not see him and yet believe in Him as risen from the dead are blessed. Doesn't that sound like blind faith? In Hebrews it says, ***We live by faith not by sight.*** Isn't that blind faith? I have been told by people, "Your faith is ridiculous. I believe in things I can study, touch, see, feel, and understand. I can't study or touch or see God. I can't understand God and what He does. I try to make God understandable to me. I need proof." A friend of mine once told me, "Doesn't it say in the Bible that God is love? He is a feeling, that great emotion of being in love. It's beautiful. Where is the proof of God beyond that?"

When we are told such things, we ask ourselves, "Is my faith blind? Am I different than any other religion? Where is the proof of God I can point to? Does God really expect me to follow Him blindly?"

Let's turn to God's Word to find the answer to that question. Let's see what Jesus expected of his disciples – was it blind faith? ***Now Thomas (called 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 it." 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."***

Thomas had doubts about Jesus rising from the dead. Who of us wouldn't? On one hand we can understand this about Thomas but on the other hand, not. How could he insist that his two eyes were better than the other disciples' twenty? The other disciples were his friends and fellow believers in Christ – how could he doubt them? But before we condemn him altogether, we should be reminded of a few things. Thomas was not more faithless than the

others. His dedication to Jesus was great. John 11:16 **Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."** Thomas was ready to die with Jesus. He confessed to the other disciples that death with Jesus is better than life without Him. All of the disciples had doubts when they first heard the reports of Jesus' resurrection. When they saw Jesus, they believed. Thomas wanted it the same for him as all the rest. He had to see Jesus, just like everyone else, and then he would believe Jesus rose from the dead. So Jesus then returned to them when Thomas was with them and did everything that Thomas declared he needed to believe in him.

We are not so quick to condemn Thomas because we too, have had doubts in our life of faith. We have these doubts because of who we are. We are sinful human beings who have no good thing in us by nature. We have made a wall between us and God because of our continual rebellion. We don't have that perfect relationship with God we need and desire. Instead, we have His condemnation for the sins we commit. We have the judgment of eternal life in hell – and that is what we deserve. And we know it! We know we deserve it!

So when God sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to save us – we doubt it. Why would God do something like this for us when we don't deserve it. Nobody, it seems, does anything for someone who doesn't deserve it, so why should God? Why should Jesus, true God and true man, live perfectly in our place? Why should Jesus suffer our punishment and death on a cross? Why should Jesus take all our sins on him and throw them away with the sacrifice of His own body? Why should He rise from the dead for us? Because HE loves us and wants us to enjoy life with Him now and forever. Because He says, **Because I live, you also will live.** Because He wants us to know that He and He alone is the gate to heaven – for the good of our souls!

In love Jesus reached out to Thomas and showed him that not only does He give forgiveness of sins and eternal life, but He does not expect blind faith, either. **Put your finger**

here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.

Jesus could give Thomas no better proof. All Thomas' doubts were erased by evidence of the resurrection. Thomas confessed his faith, **My Lord and my God!** He couldn't help but confess – and a great confession it was. Thomas gets a bad rap for doubting, but he did whatever other disciple did and confessed his faith when presented with evidence of faith. Tradition has it that Thomas went to India to spread the message of salvation through Christ – to proclaim this evidence! Did Jesus expect blind faith of Thomas? No!

Does Jesus expect blind faith of us now? **Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.** We can praise God for Thomas' doubting. Jesus showing himself to Thomas in flesh and blood as proof of His resurrection was for our benefit, too. Many other people also saw Jesus after His resurrection – the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, the women at the tomb, the guards at the tomb, and hundreds of others. It is testimony – it is proof! And this was all written down for our benefit – written so that we, too, would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in His name.

All doubts are wiped away. Only stubbornness is left for a reason for doubt. That in our Old Adam, our sinful nature, which refuses to believe anything it doesn't want to believe – evidence or not. It is not the Christians that believe without evidence. It is the people who follow those other than Christ that follow and believe blindly. The Muslims believe that Mohammed can save them, but they can see his bones in a display! How can Mohammed save them when he couldn't save himself? Our faith is built on evidence – an empty tomb and a resurrected Lord! Only Jesus has risen from the dead and only through Jesus can we have eternal life.

May we have a faith like doubting Thomas. That's right. We can't call him doubting Thomas. When we are afraid to walk across the street to talk to someone in our language about our Lord and Savior, we have no right to call a man of faith who risked his life for Christ and went to speak to others in a foreign country about salvation – we have no right to call him “doubting” Thomas. Lord, bless us like you did Thomas. May our faith be strengthened by the evidence that Jesus has given us. May God give us the strength to confess His name to those who have no hope. May we not doubt, but believe!

Blind faith? There is a lot of it out there. But blind faith in Christianity? Don't believe it for a second. Don't let anyone tell you that Christianity is blind faith even though at times it seems to be the case. Jesus didn't expect blind faith from Thomas, and He doesn't expect it from us, either. An empty tomb and a risen Lord. Believe and be saved!