



2nd Sunday of Easter

How to survive a crisis in faith

Main Scripture:

Jesus told Thomas,
"Because you have seen me, you have believed;
blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
(John 20:29)

Main Point

Have you experienced a faith crisis, a time or season when believing in God seemed almost impossible? Thomas did! There is a little bit of Thomas in all of us, because all of us have experienced times when 'doubts' got the better of us.

But we can learn something about how to survive when faith crises arise.

The strategy God gives us, will surprise you.

I'll never forget a phone call I got from my eldest son, about six months after he started university at ANU. He'd settled in really well—his studies were going great, he'd made a solid bunch of new friends, and life seemed to be humming along.

One of those new mates happened to be an atheist. And for weeks, Kenyon would tell me about these deep philosophical chats he was having with him. This guy wasn't just throwing around random opinions—he was a well-read, thoughtful thinker with strong, carefully constructed arguments about why he didn't believe in God.

Now, Kenyon had grown up in a Christian home, and he'd never really come up against that kind of challenge before. So, he grabbed every apologetics book off my bookshelf and started studying up—really wanting to learn how to defend his faith with logic and reason.

Then one night, I got a phone call. He was in tears. "Mum," he said, "none of my arguments are working. He's got a counterpoint for everything. I'm so confused—I don't even know why I believe what I believe anymore. I don't know if I'm even right to believe in God."

My heart broke. My beautiful boy was having a faith crisis. He was doubting the very truths he'd grown up believing. He wanted so much to keep believing, but the doubts were just too loud. And doubts—they come to all of us, don't they? Once they start bubbling up, it can be hard to stop them.

That brings us to today's passage, where we meet one of the most well-known doubters in Scripture: Thomas.

Point 1 | We need the Holy Spirit to help us believe—to help us 'see' God at work around us.

Before we dive into what was going on with Thomas, I want us to take a moment to sit in that strange and beautiful moment on the evening of Easter Sunday.

Picture it: the disciples were huddled together, behind locked doors, full of fear, grief, and confusion. Maybe one or two remembered Jesus saying something about rising again, but let's be honest - hope wasn't exactly thick in the air. The grief was too much. They were shattered. And even though the women had shared wild stories about angels and seeing Jesus alive, Luke tells us the men didn't believe them.

"Their words seemed like nonsense," it says. (Luke 24:11)

And who could blame them? No one rises from the dead—not after three days, not after the torture of the cross, not after being buried with spices and linen and sealed in a tomb. It was impossible.

But then, right there—in the middle of their pain and disbelief—Jesus shows up. Just appears, right in the room with them. And his words? *"Peace be with you."*

He showed them his hands and his side. He greeted them again, then said:

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And then, in a moment that's puzzled many ever since, it says he breathed on them and said: *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*(v22–23)

Now, there's plenty of debate over whether this was the moment they received the Holy Spirit, or if that happened later at Pentecost—but what we do know is that something powerful happened. Jesus *breathed* on them. Just like God breathed life into Adam in the garden.

This was a divine moment. And I believe this act empowered them to *believe*. To actually receive the truth of Jesus' resurrection deep in their hearts. Because salvation—true faith—is always a work of the Holy Spirit. It's not something we can muster up ourselves. We need the Spirit to help us believe. And once they had the Spirit, the disciples were filled with joy at seeing their risen Saviour.

But Thomas wasn't there.

Point 2 | There's a little bit of Thomas in all of us. When our hearts are broken, doubts often follow—and they can lead us into a crisis of faith.

Poor Thomas. He's forever remembered as 'Doubting Thomas,' which I think is a bit unfair. Honestly, if we hadn't been there that night either, many of us would've responded just like he did. But when we take a closer look at the New Testament, we get a fuller picture of who Thomas really was.

Back in John 11, when Jesus says he's heading to Bethany after Lazarus' death—and the disciples think it's a suicide mission—it's *Thomas* who speaks up and says, *"Let us go too, that we may die with him."* That's courage. That's loyalty.

Then in John 14, when Jesus is trying to explain he's going to prepare a place for them, it's *Thomas* who blurts out, "Lord, we don't know where you're going—how can we know the way?" Again, he's honest, genuine, not pretending to understand when he doesn't.

So, when Thomas didn't show up that day, I don't think it was because he was off playing golf somewhere. Most likely, his heart was shattered. He needed space. He needed to grieve. And when the other disciples told him they'd seen Jesus, he just couldn't get there. *"Unless I see the wounds... unless I touch them... I won't believe."* That's not just doubt talking. That's grief. That's love. That's a man who *wants* to believe, but doesn't know how.

Can you relate? I sure can. We've all struggled when our prayers seem to go unanswered. When someone we love doesn't come to faith. When healing doesn't come. When things don't work out like we'd hoped.

Thomas says what many of us have felt: *"Unless I see... I just can't believe."*

But Jesus doesn't shame him. He meets Thomas in his doubt, in his heartbreak. And then he says something for all of us: *"Because you've seen me, you believe. Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed."*

Point 3 | We're made for community—especially when our faith is shaken.

There's one more thing I want to draw our attention to. Thomas' choice to pull away from the others left him vulnerable. We can understand why he withdrew—but it came at a cost.

God places us in a family of faith for a reason. We're not meant to go it alone—especially when life falls apart. We need each other. Sure, there'll be times we can't make it to church for valid reasons—but that should be the exception, not the norm. We need that fire. That shared warmth of the Spirit that happens when we're together. Just like a coal pulled out of a fire cools quickly, so our hearts cool when we remove ourselves from fellowship.

Application | So, what do we do when we or someone around us is having a faith crisis?

We show up. We stay close. We share our stories. We remind each other why we believe. Let's be people who encourage each other's faith. Who remind one another of who God is, even when it's hard to see. Because truly—we need each other. Let's keep walking together, with honesty, with grace, and with faith—as we wait for the day when Jesus returns.

Prayer of response:

Loving Father,

We thank you that you are patient with us, even in our doubts and questions. Just as you met Thomas in his grief and confusion, we ask that you meet us in our moments of uncertainty. Help us to be honest with you, just as Thomas was—bringing our heartbreak, our questions, and our fears to you, trusting that you are big enough to hold them all.

Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit, so we may truly see you at work in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Strengthen our faith, especially when things don't make sense, and remind us that we are never alone—you have placed us in community for a reason.

Help us to be the kind of people who come alongside others when their faith falters—offering encouragement, grace, and hope. May our words and presence always point each other back to you.

We long for the day when our faith will become sight, but until then, help us to trust you more deeply, love each other more fully, and hold fast to the hope we have in Jesus. In His powerful name we pray, **Amen.**

Reflection Questions

- 1. When have I found myself doubting God or struggling to believe?**
What emotions were underneath that doubt—was it fear, disappointment, grief, or something else?
- 2. How does Jesus' response to Thomas' doubt give me hope in my own faith journey?**
What does it say about God's character that He met Thomas right where he was?
- 3. Who are the people in my life I feel safe enough to be honest with about my questions or struggles?**
How can I cultivate deeper, more authentic community with them?
- 4. Have I ever witnessed someone else's faith when mine felt weak?**
What impact did that have on me, and how might I be that kind of encouragement to someone else?
- 5. How can I invite Jesus into my moments of doubt rather than hiding them from Him?**
What might it look like to bring my full, honest self before God in prayer this week?