

**“Thomas, our Twin” John 20:24–31**

**Easter 2A 4-23-17**

God’s timing was particularly good to me this week. Before I sat down to write a sermon about a skeptic who required proof of Christ’s resurrection as a condition of believing, I saw a movie about a skeptic who required proof of Christ’s resurrection as a condition of believing. Sitting next to my wife with a box of popcorn was good way to do research. We saw *The Case for Christ*, based on the true faith journey of former atheist and Chicago journalist Lee Strobel. If you want evidence of the death and resurrection of Christ, *The Case for Christ* delivers. I highly recommend it.

Strobel gathered evidence from experts in archeology, psychology, religion, and medicine in order to disprove the resurrection. If he succeeded he would have discredited Christianity, for as Paul writes in Corinthians, “If Christ was not raised from the dead, our faith is in vain.”

Yet we are more like Thomas, also called the twin. He may have been born a natural twin, but he certainly has many twins today. Unlike Lee, but like Thomas we do believe in God, in Jesus as a great teacher, miracle worker, and that he truly died for us. But unlike Thomas we also believe He rose again. Belief in the resurrection is not our problem.

Yet how often does our weak faith utter the silent groan, “Unless I see,” when it comes to trusting God’s Word? Unless God proves Himself to me, I will not believe his promise. Faith is not always weakened by lack of evidence, but sometimes by disappointments that make us think that God doesn’t care. It may be, as with Lee Strobel and other famous skeptics, that conflicted relationships with earthly fathers make it hard to trust the heavenly Father. We don’t know how Thomas got along with his dad, but perhaps that played into his doubts. If he truly was a twin, as was Jacob, maybe his father preferred the other twin as Isaac favored Esau.

At any point, deep sorrow, disappointment in others and in ourselves, and challenges of daily life do test our faith. We are tempted to make the removal of those hardships a condition for trusting. God, if you love me, if you are who you say you are, then fix it, change that, heal this, provide what I want, lay out my path.

Yet God gives us plenty evidence that he cares and we still doubt. We are twins of those who grumbled at God after seeing with their own eyes all the miracles that freed them from Egypt. At least, when Thomas did see, he believed his own eyes, his own ears that heard Jesus and his own fingers that felt his wounds.

Yet, such evidence is not the basis of our faith. Jesus said that the truly blessed ones are those who believe even though they have not seen. God works this faith in those who earnestly search the Holy Scriptures. That is why John writes, “*these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*”

The skeptic is drawn to this faith also when they witness the love of believers reflecting the love of Jesus. When Strobel asked a Catholic priest why Jesus let himself be crucified, the one word answer was *love*. When he told his wife about his faith journey, which he had kept secret until he believed, he said the most compelling evidence was the fact that she never stopped loving him.

Blessed are we who believe without evidence. Our faith does more than satisfy curiosity. It assures us that God forgives our sins in Christ. It gives the certain comfort and hope of eternal life with God.

A theologian whom Strobel interviewed for his research had lost his wife to cancer. He told the skeptical reporter that the comforting promise of seeing his wife again did not make the resurrection true. Rather, knowing that the resurrection is true made the comfort real.

While Jesus would say blessed are those who are not Thomas’ twins in being skeptical, He would say blessed are those who make his confession. A while ago, we made that confession in the Nicene Creed, Jesus is our Lord and our God.

Thomas didn’t stop his confession that night in Jerusalem. He didn’t go back to his safe life, raise his family and settle down. According to early church father Origen, he spread the Gospel in Syria and Persia. He ended up in India where he was killed for his faith at the end of a spear.

How will you be Thomas’s twin in confessing your faith to a skeptical and even hostile world? Lee Strobel did it by writing books and traveling worldwide to reaching many more than Thomas ever could.

And what can we do? We can share that we believe Jesus is the Lord and God of all people. Jesus died and rose for you. Is there a greater and more needed message for the world? Is there a testimony more worth dying for? Thomas didn’t think so. Why would we his twins? Let us make the case for Christ by lovingly, patiently, and boldly telling all who will hear that Christ is risen! Amen.