

“That You May Believe” *John 20:30-31*.

On Feb. 19th Muslim terrorists of Boko Haram kidnapped 110 school girls in Dapchi, a village in northeastern Nigeria. They were returned four weeks later, with a warning to their parents: "Don't ever put your daughters in school again. Western education is forbidden." Pastor Ken Klaus of the Lutheran Hour writes, "The command makes little sense until you realize that for the terrorists 'Western education' also includes information about Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Savior of the world." In other words, the terrorists know the power of the word to work Christian faith.

That is the point John makes also in our text. Read text: **29-31**. John means exactly what he says. His Gospel is all about things that Jesus did to cause us to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God.

In today's Gospel Thomas believed because he saw, yet he confessed more than what he saw. He saw a wounded man once slain, but confessed a Lord and God. We see in the word the eyewitness accounts of men, but by faith we confess our Lord and God as well.

What are those things or signs of Jesus John that wrote about so that we may share in Thomas's confession? The very first sign was His birth. The word was made flesh. It starts with the Christmas. The son of God makes us be children of God.

A second sign, given to John the Baptist, was that the one on whom he saw the Spirit descend as a dove is the Son of God. John wrote, in v. 34 "*I have seen and have **borne witness** that this is the **Son of God.**"*

Later because Jesus saw him under a fig tree Nathaniel confesses, "*Rabbi, you are the **Son of God!**"*

In chapter two Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding in Cana. John added, *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And **his disciples believed** in him.*

Later Jesus says to the Jews that if they destroy this temple he would raise it in three days. John writes, *But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and **they believed** the word that Jesus had spoken.*

In chapter 11, Jesus confirms Martha's faith that **all who believe** in him will live even though they die first. Then he proves it by raising her brother from the dead. Following that we read what his followers did and his enemies feared: *Many of the Jews therefore, who had ... seen what he did, believed in him, but ... the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him.*

Finally, the greatest sign of all, the Resurrection. While they were slow to believe, even after Mary's eyewitness and after Peter and John saw the tomb empty, Jesus lets them see him that very night. The next week, Jesus also gives Thomas the evidence seen by the other disciples.

They needed to see their Lord alive, because, as Paul later wrote, if Christ is not risen, they and we would still be in sin and not have eternal life. But Christ is risen, God has accepted His sacrifice on the cross. We are forgiven and joyful.

After showing all these signs to the disciples, Jesus calls us blessed to believe without seeing them. We didn't have to experience the uncertainties of Christ's passion in real time as they did. Later, by the power of the Holy Spirit they gave clear and confident witness of what they had seen and heard. Their testimony is a blessing for us.

Through their witness, Jesus' prayer is answered in John 17: "*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.*

John inserts today's text not only as a summary of his Gospel's goal, but also as a prelude to one more sign: The great catch of fish. Jesus gave many signs that He is the Son of God so that the disciples may believe. Now he gives them a sign that he will work through His Church so that others too may believe. They are to fish for souls and forgive sins in His name. In this last sign, after they have been fishing all night with no success, He tells them where to cast their net. When they obey him, they catch more than they can haul in.

My take-away for you is that you may know and believe that Jesus is with His church all the time and for all time. As he directs His Church, this church, where to cast your net, you can confidently follow his lead. The haul will be great because He is faithful. Be net casters, go where he leads, do what he instructs. You will be blessed, not by sight, but by faith, for He is the Christ, the Son of God. That, my friends, you may believe, always. Amen.