

April 5, 2015 by Steve Brandon



Show Me!

John 20:24-29

- 1. Not Seeing, Not Believing (verses 24-25)**
- 2. Seeing, And Believing (verses 26-28)**
- 3. Not Seeing, And Believing (verse 29)**

Willard Duncan Vandiver of Missouri served in the United States House of Representatives from 1897 to 1903. In the middle of his service, in 1899, he gave a speech at a naval banquet in Philadelphia in which he said, "I come from a state that raises corn and cotton and cockleburrs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me." And ever since, Missouri has been known as, "The Show Me State."

In fact, it's their state motto. They are known today as "The Show Me State." It's an attitude that is held by those in Missouri. They are not a gullible people. Regardless of how fine-sounding your argument may appear, they won't take your word for it. They need sufficient evidence to believe anything.

In this way, those from Missouri share a characteristic of a Biblical character named Thomas. He's the one who has come to be known as "Doubting Thomas." You might easily call him, "Thomas from Missouri."

After the other disciples had seen Jesus, risen from the dead, He was the one who said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe" (John 20:25). In effect, he was saying, "You need to show me."

My message this morning is entitled, "Show Me!" It comes from John, chapter 20. Our text covers verses 24-29. However, to catch the context, I want to read the entire chapter.

John 20

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although 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, and see my hands;

and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but 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.

It's a great story. It's a story of disappointment turned to hope.

This past week a story has broke upon the national scene of 37-year-old Louis Jordan, who was lost at sea for 66 days when the mast on his boat broke in a storm. He said, "I was planning on catching some big ones. On the way there, my boat capsized. I was actually sleeping, that's when it happened. The whole boat had turned around and I was flying through the air somersaulting and the ceiling was the floor and the floor was the ceiling and this side was the other side and everything was upside down and backwards. ... I was just rolling around with all the things, all the objects, all my possessions and electronics and GPS and even my stove had come off of the wall and was flying in the air with me. We're all just turning around together and I land against the wall and I break my shoulder." [\[1\]](#)

He set sail on January 23rd on a solo fishing trip. Six days later (on January 29th), his family filed a "missing person report with the coast guard." The coast guard began search 10 days later (on February 8th). After 10 days, the search was suspended.

Now, fortunately for him, the ship righted itself, which gave him protection from the sun. It also gave him shelter from the sun. Furthermore, his boat had about a month's worth of canned foods. But, when these ran out, Louis Jordan said that he learned to survive on raw fish and rainwater.

Back home, his family was going through a range of emotions. On his father's Facebook page, he put forth the feelings he was going through, especially after the coast guard stopped their search.

"When your son disappears and the weeks wear on, and the weather is cold and the Atlantic is stormy and wild, many horrible thoughts begin to go through your mind, and you begin to unravel. ... Your life becomes a muddled jumble of prayers and tears and doubts."

March 2 - "Now it appears that Louis may be gone. God only knows when I will join him and the others, you know, the ones who have left us. The ones who played their parts on this stage of life and then exited to make room for others..."

March 10 - "Nothing from or about Louis, ... You don't know whether to mourn or what. When they're lost at sea, only God knows where they are." [\[2\]](#)

Finally, after 66 days at sea, he was spotted by a passing cargo ship. Now, can you imagine the reunion with his family? They thought him to be dead. But, he was found alive. His mother said, "It's amazing. ... It's been very difficult not knowing anything, and I just feel like all of our prayers have come true. They've been answered." [\[3\]](#)

Similar feelings were experienced by the disciples of Jesus. They were all filled with sorrow as their leader was crucified and buried in the tomb. Jesus had told them of His resurrection. But, the fact remained that He was dead. They didn't believe. They didn't understand. That's what verse 9 says, "they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead."

And yet, with reports of the empty tomb, there was hope. But, it was all veiled and their minds were swirling. That's what makes the appearances of Jesus so marvelous. It was so unexpected by the disciples. Mary initially thought that Jesus was the gardener (verse 15). When she realized that it was Jesus, she held Him tightly (verse 17). When the disciples heard of the empty tomb, Peter and John went running to investigate. But they returned without seeing Jesus. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, they were "glad when they saw the Lord" (verse 20).

But, verse 24 says that "Thomas ... was not with them when Jesus came. That's when Thomas said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe" (John 20:25). This leads us nicely into my first point.

1. Not Seeing, Not Believing (verses 24-25)

This was Thomas' position. Unless I see, I will not believe. Now, Thomas often gets a bad rap for being a "doubter." Yet, he really wasn't any different really than all of the other disciples. He simply wanted proof of the resurrection. The other disciples had an opportunity to see Jesus and touch Jesus. Look back at verse 19, ...

John 20:19-20

... Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples saw Jesus, but Thomas missed out. And my guess is that if they had wanted to put their fingers in the mark of the nails and if they had wanted to place their hands into His side, Jesus would have allowed them to do so.

Before Jesus appeared to the disciples, they hadn't believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. They were behind locked doors (verse 19). They were fearful of the Jews (verse 19). This all changed after they had seen Jesus and taken in the implications of his resurrection. Just read the book of Acts and you will see how fearless the disciples became.

Unfortunately for Thomas, he wasn't with the disciples when Jesus had appeared to them (verse 24). So, he hadn't seen Jesus. He simply heard their testimony, "We have seen the Lord" (verse 25). But, like those from Missouri, this wasn't good enough for him. He said, "I want Jesus to show me!" He wanted proof. He wanted to see Jesus, just like the other disciples had seen Him. Until then, Thomas wouldn't believe. Or, as I have said it, "Not Seeing, Not Believing."

Now, again, if you think that this is because Thomas was a doubter, think again. This is totally against his character. In chapter 11, Jesus and the disciples were headed to Jerusalem. And Thomas said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). He was a man filled with zeal for the Lord. But, he wanted proof.

This isn't a bad thing. God never calls us to believe without reason. Today in our society, faith has come to be seen as something entirely subjective, regardless of whether or not it's true. In other words, the focus of our world today is not upon the reality of the object of faith, but upon the willingness to believe anything. That's why many say that you can't argue with someone's beliefs. It is all subjective and personal.

But, such is not Biblical faith. See, God never calls us to a "blind faith" that has no grounds for believing. God always gives us reason to believe. In His creation, He shows forth His glory. In His scripture, He explains His mercy. In our conscience, He puts forth sin's reality.

In history, He has displayed His power. In prophecy, He shows His credibility. In Jesus, He has put forth Himself, God in the flesh. Hebrews 1:1-2a says, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us in his Son." God always gives us reason to believe in Him. And I do not believe that Thomas' statement was unreasonable.

Now, we need to be careful. I don't think that we ought to make such demands. There are many today who are looking for signs. God, you need to do this. God, if I'm ever going to believe you, you need to do this.

Jesus condemns this sort of attitude with no uncertain words. "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign" (Matthew 12:39). Yet, he still gave that generation a sign. It was the sign of the resurrection.

Matthew 12:39-40

But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

And by God's grace, Thomas was privileged to see the sign with his own eyes. We come to our second point.

2. Seeing, And Believing (verses 26-28)

John 20:26-28

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although 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, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

What a privilege! Thomas was able to put his finger in the nail marks of Jesus. Thomas was able to put his hand into the side of Jesus. And he believed! He said, "My Lord and my God!" A clear expression of the divinity of Jesus.

Now, this isn't what we would have expected John to say. We would have expected something more along the lines of, "Yes! It is true! You are alive! Hallelujah!" But, the different response demonstrates that John had been processing in his mind about the realities of the resurrection, and what it would prove. When John saw Jesus alive and could actually touch Him, his response was an act of worship, "My Lord and my God!"

When Cornelius fell at the feet of Peter to worship him, Peter said, "Stand up; I too am a man" (Acts 10:25). When those in Lystra began to worship Paul, he cried out against them, saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you" (Acts 14:15). When John fell at the feet of an angel to worship him, the angel rebuked him, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God" (Revelation 22:9). But, no such rebuke took place when Thomas professed Jesus to be God. Because, in fact, Thomas' profession was true. Indeed, Jesus is Lord. Indeed, Jesus is God. His resurrection proves it.

Look at how personal Thomas' confession was. He said, "**My** Lord and **my** God." This is not some cold creedal statement of faith. No, this is a living reality in Thomas' life. Jesus was His Lord! Jesus was His God! Indeed, such a profession is needed for all who would be saved.

We know that, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). The call of the Bible is to believe Jesus to be your Lord and your God! Is He? Have you embraced Jesus Christ as the sovereign Lord of your life? Where you go where He calls you to go. Where you do what He calls you to do. Is Jesus Christ your God? Is He the one you worship? Is He the one you follow?

This was certainly the case for Thomas. According to church tradition, he brought the gospel to India, and died a martyr's death there. And this was the case with all of the apostles. They had seen and experienced the resurrected Christ, and went out preaching what they saw.

In fact, as you read through the book of Acts, a similar theme occurs over and over again. The apostles were merely preaching what they had seen and believed. In other words, as they went out and preached the gospel, they did so as eye-witnesses to the event!

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he spoke of the resurrection, saying, "This Jesus, ... you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ... This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:23, 32). Later, Peter would preach, "You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). And when Peter and John were arrested for preaching Jesus to the multitudes and ordered not to preach, they said, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). And so they went out, preaching that they had seen and believed.

Subsequently, they were arrested and brought in again to stand before the religious counsel again. The high priest admonished them saying, ...

Acts 5:28-32

"We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

All of the apostles had seen. And all of the apostles had believed. And all of the apostles were preaching what they had witnessed. This is exactly what Jesus instructed them.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

This is what the apostles were eye-witnesses to. And we are called to believe their testimony.

3. Not Seeing, And Believing (verse 29)

John 20:29

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This is God's call upon our lives. To believe without seeing. God calls us to believe that Jesus rose from the dead without actually seeing Him risen from the dead.

To see Jesus was the privilege of Thomas and the disciples and Mary and Paul and over 500 people to whom Jesus appeared at one time after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:6). But, not us.

We are called to believe without seeing. We are called to believe these witnesses.

Earlier in my message I told you about Louis Jordan, who was lost at sea for 66 days. I hesitated to tell you that story, because there are some things that are causing some to question his story. Why was he in such good health after 66 days adrift? He refused medical attention. How could he walk so well after being on a small boat for two months? Why was he not dehydrated? Why was he not sunburned? How could he be sleeping in such a great storm? What about his testimony of hurting his shoulder?

And it may turn out to be a hoax. But, then again, it may turn out to be true. At this point in time, we just don't know. But, the authorities are looking into the story. They are doing their investigations. We need to wait for the evidence to come in. And his story will be vindicated, or not.

But, when all of the evidence is in, what will you believe? Will you say, "Unless I see his boat, and unless I touch the broken mast, I will not believe"? You won't. You will believe the preponderance of evidence that comes through the media. In other words, you will believe the witnesses. You will believe those from the cargo ship who spotted the crippled boat; those from the coast guard who brought him home; those from his family who really believed that he was dead; those who investigated the facts for themselves.

Well, regarding the resurrection of Jesus, all of the evidence is in. The resurrection of Jesus has proved itself to be true. Jesus really walked the earth, of this there is no doubt. Jesus really died, there is no evidence that He merely swooned (that is, was comatose but not dead); Jesus really raised from the dead. You cannot explain the phenomenon of the apostles or the rapid expansion of the early church without the resurrection.

God isn't calling us to believe without some credible reasons. In fact, this is the argument of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. It would be good reading for you this afternoon at home. Paul says this, "If Christ has not been raised, ... we are of all people most to be pitied" for believing

such a hoax, and placing all of our hope on Him (1 Corinthians 15:19).

But, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead! (1 Corinthians 15:20). And you must believe it to be saved. Again, Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." And verse 29 says that we are blessed if we believe without seeing.

John 20:29

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This is a beatitude, just like the one ones in the Sermon on the Mount. It means that God's favor will rest upon you if you believe in the resurrection. Not everyone in the early church was able to see Jesus. To the scattered churches, Peter wrote, ...

1 Peter 1:8-9

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Do you love Jesus? I know that you haven't seen him. I know that you don't see Him now. But, do you believe that He was raised from the dead?

If you say, "Show me!" I say, "God has!" You have enough proof. You have the Scriptures. You have the gospel of John.

John 20:30-31

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but 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.

So believe in the resurrection. Believe that Jesus is the Christ. Believe that He is the Son of God. And enjoy life in His name!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 5, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/louis-jordan-interview-n335086>.

[2] As reported on <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/04/03/shipwrecked-sailor-survived-66-days-at-sea-on-rainwater-raw-fish-and-prayers/>.

[3] <http://www.wjla.com/articles/2015/04/sailor-missing-for-66-days-rescued-by-coast-guard-in-atlantic-112871.html>.