

Reflection Sunday 24th April.

John 20:19-31

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.²¹ Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'²⁸ Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

This passage from near the end of John's Gospel is another well-known passage. It has led to the phrase "doubting Thomas". One little incident in a man's life has led to that title being used of him 2000 years later. Thomas was not the only one who doubted as we find out at the end of Matthew's Gospel (28:17) "When they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some doubted"

Doubting is not the full picture of Thomas. His life was far more than one incident. Even within the Gospel passages there is more to Thomas than doubt and it is believed that he went on to be the person who took the Gospel into India

I can take this reflection forward in a number of ways; do we assess people on the basis of one incident in a person's life? Do we judge people by our initial encounter with a person?

In a different way, "How will you be remembered?"

One of the privileges of ministry is sharing with people in different stages of life. There are the times of joy around a wedding and of a new birth, of baptisms and other times of celebrations but of course that is not the only part of life shared in by a minister. There are times of pain and sadness too, times of privilege.

One time of privilege is to share in the story of a person's life; sometimes it is of course after a death when I get to sit with a family and hear the story of a person's life.

I also get to talk to a person and hear something of their story whilst they are alive. Over the years these conversations have led me to find out things about a person's life that very few people know. I hear of some wonderful achievements that are not generally known; so often the people with these stories of achievement are quiet and unassuming people.

John wrote his account of the life of Jesus that the readers "may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."

What would it be like if your life-story was like a book that meant that many came to have life in the name of Jesus? That is the fuller story of the life of Thomas, not just one incident of doubt. So even if you do doubt your life-story could still bring people to faith in Jesus.