

# From Something Broken Comes Something Beautiful

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Peace be with you!

Even as Christians, we struggle to understand the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The world tells us that death gets the last word—you are born, live, and die: *the end*. There is nothing beyond the grave, and when we study science, that makes sense. When plants die, we can watch them decompose and disappear, and therefore we believe it to be true.

Although Mary Magdalene comes and tells the disciples she has seen the Lord, they barricade themselves in a room (John 20:18-19). In fear of the Jews, the disciples create a sense of security by closing and locking the windows and doors—no one should be able to go in or out. The disciples have legitimate reasons to fear the Jews. Somehow, the Jewish leaders are now allies with the Roman leaders who will kill anyone that does not pledge their allegiance to the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> The disciples have pledged their allegiance to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. They followed him for three years before the Romans crucified him. Now the disciples have to face the aftermath of Jesus dying. There will be no more healings. Jesus will not tell any more parables. The disciples are scared of what will happen next.

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<sup>1</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 1200.

We have all been where the disciples are right now. We have all wanted to hide after something—a breakup, traumatic event, illegal activity, or [whatever “it” is]. Some of us run into our rooms, lock the door, and hide in the bed under the blankets. Others pack a bag and put distance between the situation and themselves. Others turn to drugs or alcohol to escape reality, while others simply just deny [whatever “it” is] happened. The disciples are hiding out of fear and from being disorientated. The man who had given them a sense of purpose has been killed. And not just killed, but brutally beaten, forced to carry his cross-beam a mile through uneven streets, and then hung on the cross to die. Talk about a traumatic experience. No wonder the disciples are hiding in a locked room.

Then Jesus breaks into the locked-up room, greets the disciples (“Peace be with you”), and shows them his wounds (John 20:19-20). The disciples rejoice when they see the risen Lord (John 20:20). They finally get what Jesus meant when he said he would rise after three days, and they rejoice that their dear friend who was dead is now alive. Jesus defeats the ways and ideas of the world and breaks into our lives. Jesus breaks the rules of the world in order to give us the opportunity to renew our relationship with God the Father. Jesus redefines what is possible.

Before we go any further, I want to revisit Jesus’s and Thomas’s conversation before going to see Lazarus. Remember when Jesus got word Lazarus was sick and the disciples were afraid for Jesus to go to Jerusalem, because Jewish leaders wanted to stone Jesus. It was Thomas who said, “Let us go too, so we may die with him.” (John 11:16b). Thomas is a devoted disciple who follows Jesus to the cross; he is ready to die with Jesus Christ, his Lord and his God.

However, Thomas is not present when Jesus breaks into the room and does not believe the others actually saw Jesus (John 20:24-25).

Thomas says, “Listen boys, I have to see Jesus and touch his wounds for myself before I will believe this fairy tale you are telling me” (see John 20:25). Thomas probably saw the Roman Soldiers beat and crucify Jesus. Thomas probably saw Jesus take his last breath. Jesus, the Son of God, was killed and was not coming back.

We quickly tag Thomas as a doubter, but we forget the others did not believe Mary until they encountered Jesus themselves. Many of us have doubted God one time or another, even after making a grand proclamation of faith, like Thomas had.

Thomas is no more of a doubter or an unbeliever than the other ten disciples or even us today. Thomas desperately wants the same encounter the other ten disciples experienced. Thomas is just following the pattern the Gospel of John established: you have to have your own encounter with Jesus in order to come to believe in him. The Samaritan woman encountered Jesus, believed, and told others who did not believe in Jesus until they encountered him themselves (John 4:42).<sup>2</sup>

A week after Jesus’s first appearance, the disciples, including Thomas, are locked in the room, and just as they said, Jesus enters the room without opening any doors and says, “Peace be with you” (John 20:26). Then Jesus turns to Thomas and says, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Then Thomas says, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:27-28 NRSV). Thomas gets to see Jesus’s hands, feet, and side where he was nailed to the cross and stabbed. He gets up close and personal and sees Jesus’s wounds, and therefore, he believes.

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<sup>2</sup> Karoline Lewis, David Lose, and Matt Skinner, “Brainwave 173: Lectionary Texts for the of 1st of May 2011,” *Working Preacher*, St Paul, MN, April 24, 2011.

Thomas sees Jesus, his Lord and his God, within the context of the human condition—as a broken individual—and yet Jesus overcomes the grave for our sake. In *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, Nancy L. Eiesland writes, “The disabled God emerges in the particular situation in which people with disabilities and others who care [for them] find themselves as they try to live out their faith and to fulfill their calling to live ordinary lives of worth and dignity.”<sup>3</sup> If people with disabilities are able to imagine God as being disabled, then they are able to see themselves in the image of God, which enforces the important truth that they are a part of God’s good creation. Thomas sees his God taking the form of a human, suffering greatly for our sins, and still claiming victory over the grave.

This is what makes the resurrection so powerful. Jesus conquers the grave but still has his scars. The disciples really could see and touch his wounds. During Lent, I invited you to write down what you wanted to lay down at the cross and tape it on a painting. Even with the best of intentions, you still have to fight daily urges and impulses. You still have the scars of your past decisions. You still have the memory and the guilt. You still worry about your children. You still fear [whatever “it” is]. These things do not magically go away. However, here is the game changer: Jesus knows our pain and suffering and has the scars to prove it, yet he continues to walk besides us to see us through anything and everything.

Yesterday, Vicki Pritchard and I spent all day designing and making a mosaic from the papers under the cross. The words are flipped over, though some words still show through the paper. The scars of your past are still there, but God is able to use you, despite

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 98.

your brokenness, to do something beautiful. The mosaic shows how God breaks through our darkness and is always with us. God walks besides us and guides us along our paths in life through the darkness to the light. It is easy to submerge yourself in your brokenness—depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, physical limitations or [whatever “it” is]. However, God loves you, despite your brokenness, and he will see you through anything and everything. The power of the resurrection is that Jesus falls aside us, and he picks us up time after time again!

Thanks be to God!

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for conquering the grave through Jesus’s crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Help us to turn away from the world’s lies and addictions. Lift us up from our brokenness into your loving arms. Reveal the power of the resurrection through our actions. Thank you for coming alongside us and picking us up, time after time. Amen.*