

would not because I want to be in that group when Jesus comes, and mark it down, Jesus said (He is coming back) and suppose He returns while on a Sunday eveing when the church is in worship and you are out in the godless world occupied with something of insignificance.

II. Why do you think that he failed to attend church?

Was it because he was (sick) or was it because he had something else that was pressing him that was (important)? Let us venture a few ideas. Was it because he was (indifferent?) There are many people who separate themselves from the services of the church and the fellowship of the saints because they are indifferent. They have become absorbed in a thousand matters until they are interested in these things and not in the affairs of the church and the Kingdom. Was it because he found (satisfaction) elsewhere? Of course not. Thomas was not satisfied. He was not happy and I doubt if there was a sadder person than Thomas anywhere to be found in Jerusalem because he felt wretched. And yet there are lots of people tonight who believe they are being satisfied when they stay away from church and when they take up worldly things to occupy their minds, they believe that they are getting some satisfaction and there are a great score of them tonight who are watching TV feeling that they are getting the satisfaction of their souls. Was it because he had (lost hope)? Well,

INTRODUCTION: We are still following John's story through the gospels as this evening we arrive at the place where Jesus had already met with the disciples (on the Lord's Day) and appeared to them but we discover that there was one who did not attend the service. And so we would like to use this as an illustration of why we should attend the Sunday night worship.

I. What pew was vacant?

I wonder if we notice what pew was vacant that had been usually occupied during the services but there was a vacant pew or seat, chair in the upper room and that chair had been usually occupied by an individual. Was it the man (Judas)? Of course, we know that he was missing, he was not there, he was not expected to come to this meeting no doubt because he had already gone to his own place. Was it (Pilate)? Was he expected to come? Yet he had had the chance already to befriend Jesus and he had let his conscience be toyed with and against his better judgement he had sent Him to be crucified. Was the missing man the (high priest?) Surely he would be present there that a religious service following the death of Jesus Christ but he was the man who stood in the very presence of Christ and shouted blasphemy.

(Who was this man) who failed to attend church and we

read the text and we discover that there is a very familiar name by the name of Thomas. He was missing. Now Thomas was expected to be there because he was one of the disciples and he was one of their members and the followers of Jesus and therefore it was his duty to be present in that service.

It is a sad day in any congregation when its own membership begins to absent themselves from its services. It is a sad day for any congregation when those who compose it can be counted on to be at some social function or can be counted on to be at their place of business on Monday or who can be counted on to be somewhere else but can never be counted on when the interest of the kingdom of God is at stake and there are some members who cannot be counted on when the Son of God goes forth to war. Believe me, no community ever loses respect for a church or for a congregation of people until they lose respect of themselves.

And I want you to notice here that ~~the~~ Thomas was absent and was (not there when Jesus came). What an unfortunate time to be away, you say. And my how we tremble tonight to think what a great calamity it was for him to have missed that service and think of all the others who missed it. And yet there was a little group of disciples who had gathered there for meditation and prayer and Jesus came behind the closed doors where their hearts were burdened

and filled with fear and yet one of the saddest men of the group was not even present for consolation.

My friends, of course, as we think of it, (had he known) or had any idea that it was going to be such a wonderful service, he would have gone and he would have never missed. Had he dreamed that Jesus Christ would have come, he would not have missed it. But (like some of you) he expected the meeting to be a dull affair, he felt confident that there would just be the same old crowd and he expected that Peter and James and John and the rest of them would be there ~~looking~~ (talking about the glories of the past and what Jesus had done for them) and when they left their fishing and their work to follow Him they would tell of all the dreams they had and they would tell this and that ~~and~~ the other and so no doubt with a feeling that they would just be the usual thing so Thomas had missed the service.

But I ask you tonight (was the meeting dull) was the meeting sad? Why, of course, not. As every service when the people of Christ come together there is joy and thrill and blessing. It was a meeting that made the future glow with glorious possibilities. It was wonderful because Jesus came.

And therefore (I would not absent myself) from the meeting together of the people of God and I would not advise any Christian to miss the time of the services of the church. I

quickly see what he missed and as I think about what ~~about~~ people miss today by not coming to the preaching services, I think of Thomas. He missed first of all the privilege of seeing Jesus. He missed that privilege of seeing Him who had gone through death and hell and the grave and was now alive. He missed seeing Him face to face and what a marvelous day that was. He missed seeing Jesus and failed to see him. He missed the glory and the certainty of life after death. It was Christ my friends that makes heaven an eternity and eternal life sure for us that met with them that day. And think what people miss today by not assembling themselves with God's people

In the second place I think he missed the great spiritual thrill that would have been his had he been there that night and had been the Lord, ~~thou~~ this my dear friends is a possibility in every service. It ought to be. It is a possibility in every successful service. People are thirsting to see Jesus and when they drink of that water of Life they are lifted up. We know that when the message was given, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Of course, they were glad. Of course, they rejoiced. And they were spiritually lifted up and Thomas missed this when he missed that service. Another thing he missed was that gift of peace. Jesus said, "Peace be unto you." And if any man needed it, it was Thomas. His life was restless and wretched. And

he believed that Jesus Christ was dead, he believed that the cause that He had stood for was just about lost forever and was defeated and therefore, he had somewhat lost his hope in what might take place.

I imagine some of the disciples met him and tried to talk to him and tell him about the meeting that was being held. He no doubt had been invited to come and they asked him, are you not coming? Jesus is going to be there. And he probably said, No I can't make it. And they probably invited him and he said, You do not think Jesus is going to be there, do you? When I have been to the garden, I have watched the soldiers I looked at Him on the cross, and I know I heard His awful cry, My God, my God, why have I been forsaken? And he says, Don't talk to me about seeing Jesus again. He is dead and we'll never see Him again. And after that meeting there were 10 men who came saying, I tell you, we have seen Jesus. He came into the room where we were. We know it was Jesus, we saw the marks of the nails in His hands and in His feet and the spear print in His side. You listen to what Thomas said. "That may do for you, but I won't believe it until I put my finger in the nail prints, I will have to see it for myself. I will have to put my finger there. These disciples gave him the account, of what had taken place. We have seen the Lord. We are satisfied. He had given to them full proof and Thomas

was not with them, he was absent. And they said, We have seen the Lord. That was the most comfortable sight. This they said to Thomas. Perhaps to unbraid him because of his absence. They told him this to inform him that they had seen the Lord and they wished that he had been there with them. Is that not true . . . time and time again. We say to (our friends) I wish that you had been in that service. It was such a blessing. The disciples of Christ should endeavor to build up one another in their most holy faith, both by repeating what they have seen and heard to those who were absent. And yet this second hand experience is not enough. For Thomas will raise an objection against the evidence to justify himself in his unwillingness to admit it. Tell me not that you have seen the Lord alive, he said. Somebody has made fools of you. For my part, except I see it, he says, then I ~~will~~ am resolved I will not believe it. He had neither heeded or duly regarded what Christ had so often said, that as according to the (Old Testament) that He would rise again on the third day. He did not pay just deference to the testimony of his fellow-disciples who were men of wisdom and integrity. And (today) when Christian people try to plead with other Christians to attend the worship service to come to Bible study and to Sunday school, it is very difficult to persuade them to know that it for their own welfare and that the record is true.

I believe that in this (he even tempted Christ and limited the Holy Spirit) when he would not be convinced except by a method of his own choosing. Thomas tied up his faith to this evidence. And either Christ must humor it or in some way come up a way that He might come to see. The stand that he took no doubt discouraged the disciples and was an offense to them. It was not only a sin but it was a scandal. At once it made them feel very little, as today when an individual goes and tries to enlist someone in full time attendance for Christ they smear or take it lightly as skeptics and just brush it off somehow and put it aside. It is very sorrowful and bitter that Thomas was not there. He found it hard to believe. He found it almost impossible. Now there are some folks today dear friends who are sweetened up by sorrow and yet there are others who are made bitter. I have heard of a man/once who said, "I could curse God if I knew there was a God for letting little Mary die." There are lots of people today who grow bitter and calaspe when it seems that the stars in the sky go out. And yet in my estimation the neediest man of all the crowd was the one who stayed away from the meeting.

III. What this church service would have meant to him.

Now dear friends as we come to think about what this would have meant to Thomas, if we would use (our imagination), we could

strong faith fears not when God carries the creature beyond the depth of his reason. We know not what to do, said good Jehoshaphat, but our eyes are upon thee. II Chronicles 20 As if he had said, we are in a sea of trouble beyond our own help or any thought how we can win out of these straits but our eyes are upon thee. We dare not give up our case for desperate so long as there is strength in thine arms.

Now we come to verse 26 after 8 days. We discover that the disciples met again in the service and on the next Lord's day where Christ was ~~staying~~ during these 8 days. We do not know where ever he was no doubt angels were ministering to Him as at the beginning of His ministry we remember that there were 40 days unseen when He was tempted by the evil Spirit, Matt. 4:122. Now at the beginning of His glory He was 40 days for the most part unseen, attended by good spirits. He deferred it so long as 7 days and why so? That He might and rebuke Thomas, come ~~intoxicated~~ He had neglected the former meeting of the disciples and to keep Him ~~acquainted~~ to prize those seasons of grace better for the future. He cannot have such another opportunity for several days. And he that (slips one tide) may stay a good while for another and therefore Jesus wanted to get across the idea that He should be regular. That he might try to faith and patience to the rest of the disciples. They were satisfied that they had seen the Lord.

out here in the highway tonight are people without peace. They are restless and unbelief. He might have had the vision of Him who stood there that night because he had heard Him say, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, but he missed Him that night when He said, Peace be unto you.

① He missed the commission that Jesus gave them as the Father has sent me, so send I you. The (great program) of the disciples was missed by this man because he ~~was~~ not there. And today because a man does not attend his church, he does not know what the program of his church is. I am persuaded that deacons and teachers and officers and leaders ought to be in the midst of their church if they are to know what the goals are and what the church ought to do. ② He missed Jesus breathing upon them and giving them the promise of the Holy Spirit. O think how much he missed. How his heart would have been warmed and stirred and he missed this benediction that Jesus breathed upon these disciples. It may be that some of you tonight have been active in church and you live an enthusiastic Christian life but little by little you step back in to the ways of the world and in the ways of the world in this city tonight there are people who have moved here from other places. Their life has been thrown in this great city. They have missed the fellowship of yesterday where they used to attend the House of God regularly. ~~He~~ Don't

deceive yourself. The saints of God meet together and Jesus Christ still manifests Himself in their midst and He still gives them the blessing of His Spirit. In thinking of what he missed, he missed everything that was worthwhile. I say this very sincerely. That there of all the many, many things he missed, he missed the one thing that was absolutely sure and that was having the (presence of Jesus). And if a person misses the presence of Jesus, then certainly he is likely to make shipwreck of everything else. And when you do not walk day by day with Jesus you certainly do not have anything worthwhile. I feel again that he missed the privilege of giving. When the otherx disciples came away from that meeting they were radiant, they were joyful, they were happy, they were marvelously thrilled and wanted to tell the story. And yet Thomas (had nothing to tell) and that is just about the case of ninety-five percent of the Christians tonight. They are not active enough in Christian work to have anything to tell. He had not received anything and therefore he had nothing to give out. He was a disappointment to Jesus Christ, his Master. And he had gone a whole week doubting Him and mistrusting Him. Something else he missed was the privilege of helping the disciples. What an encouragement he could have been to them. How he could have strengthened the other Christians with his faith if he had seen the Lord but he missed

that privilege and therefore he had nothing to give out and to help and to encourage his other friends. He not only robbed himself but he robbed the fellowship and that a tragedy when people (stay away from church they rob themselves and they rob the fellowship as well. They (starve) themselves spiritually and they fail to have ~~xxxx~~ food and bread, the Bread of Life, enough to help others spiritually. And like a lot of other people in church today, Thomas was slow and critical and he wanted a lot of proof about this and he wanted to test everything if it didn't go just his way he wouldn't be satisfied and he wouldn't accept. And after full proof from the disciples it seems that he would need no more as he listened to them but it was very dishonoring to his Lord and it was very unreasonable and it was presumptuous. It was damaging to himself and it was dangerous for him to expect this lack of faith. When we think of how much damage he perhaps could have done by his unbelief by just poking around as many Christians do today.

How many things can a man relate which appear impossible to a child and yet here was a man who could not follow the truth ~~and~~ ^{that} had been given to him and he was afraid to launch out into the deep. A skillful (swimmer) is not afraid to go out into the deep whereas young learners feel for the ground and they feel that they must stay close to the bank, but

to the Lord's invitation and would satisfy himself that this was Jesus, the Living Christ. He declared in an open confession that all of his doubts had disappeared, "Thou art my Lord and my God." In verse 29 we see the judgement of Christ upon the whole and it is well thou art brought to it even at last upon any terms at all. Christ owns Thomas as a believer as a sincere believer. No sooner than did Thomas confess the Christ than Christ gives Him the comfort. He upbrades him for his former doubts, he might well be ashamed to think that he had been so backward to believe and came so slowly to his own comforts. Those that in sincerity have closed with Christ see a great deal of reason to lament that they did not do it sooner. Every individual after coming to Christ wonders why he waited or delayed in the decision. That it was not without much ado that he was brought to believe at last.

He commends the faith that he believed upon these easier terms and then He goes on to say, "But rather blessed are those who have not had this privilege," Hebrews 11:1. II Corinthians 4:18, But the motives of faith Christ's miracles and especially the resurrection, Blessed are those that see not these and yet believe in Christ. He is thinking about the Old Testament saints who had not seen the things which Thomas had been able to see and yet had believed. They believed

And these disciples no doubt had come to realize that gradually they must be weined away from the bodily presence of Jesus. That He might put His arm upon them the first day of the week and this would be the first observance of the church as the Christian sabbath, the weekly day of holy rest. He met with His disciples in a religious assembly and He promised to meet with them every week on the first day of the week.

Where and how Christ made them this visit. It was in Jerusalem. And the doors were shut as on the other. That Thomas was with them though he was not present the first time, when we have lost one opportunity, we should give the more earnest heed to lay hold on the next that we may recover our losses. It is a good sign if such a loss whets our appetite and our desire but it is a bad sign if it cools them off. Christ did not appear to Thomas for His satisfaction to be found him in the assembly with the rest of the disciples. There in the midst of them he says I will be and what an assurance and a promise to us tonight. Christ came to them all. They all knew Him. The Gates of Heaven were ready to be opened to Him and yet for the benefit of His church He lingered on earth to visit with them in their service. Verse 27.
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What ~~was~~ between Christ and Thomas at this meeting. It certainly glorious. Christ come down into their midst and I

want to point out to you as a psalmist says, there is no doubt or unbelieving word on your tongue or your mind at any time that is not known to Jesus Christ and here He comes to express Himself to His weakness and He suffers right here His wounds to be raked into and He allows Thomas to thrust his hand into His side for the confirmation of our faith, he has instituted an ordinance on purpose to keep His death in remembrance that shameful death that we shall never forget it, the memorial Supper. We show the Lord's death, we are called as it were to put our finger into the print of the nails.

We see here that He, I don't know whether he was proud of his doubts. He did not look upon them as a blessing or as a pleasure but here a lot of people today who doubt and I have heard men speak and say, I have my doubts as if to say, whether it is true or not. But no man if is of necessity the richer for his doubts I know that doubt may become a doorway to larger faith but I also know that no man is rich because he has doubts and the man who doubts can hotly consider himself the possessor of a prize to be coveted.

Men are thoroughly wretched because of their doubts and being fairly wretched because of them, he will not be set right. But Thomas wanted to believe. He seemed to be to me that of all men, he would believe.

There is one thing that I admire that he did not go to the

hands of the enemies of Christ to seek information. He could have gone to the strangers and asked them about which so happens many times to people today. They often go to false things and they get some sort of a book and they begin to read and this book only strengthens their doubts. When they told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, no doubt that Thomas listening about this wonderful service that he had missed, decided that he would be on hand the next time they had a meeting and how wonderful it would be if all the Christians members of the churches even in our city should in their hearts hear about the blessings of Christ and decide to go and investigate for themselves. But for those who say there is nothing you can say or do that will make you believe I simply will not believe then they are without hope. I do not think the disciples argued over this matter. Really it would have done no good but this man who was an honest doubter made it a point to be with them on the next Lord's day.

He was a hungry-hearted individual and he wanted to give himself an opportunity to know the truth. He says I will turn my face to the east, and I will look for the sunrise and what happens. The sun rose, even the Son of Righteousness with healing in His wings. He stood there in the midst even though the doors were shut. And when he consented

friends, Thomas didnot seem to have very much light. But he was willing to be true to the light that he had. And being true to it, he found a fullness of the light and as God's words say, (If any man is willing) to do his will he shall know, it. In other words there is a sufficiency of testimony without seeing Jesus. You have not seen Him and yet have believed. And you are as strong in your faith as Thomas was.

the promises made unto the Father, they looked forward to the coming of Christ but the Gentiles must look backward to Christ upon the cross. Those who saw and believed not were far from being blessed. Those who saw Him and Believed were undoubtedly blessed. Those who have not seen and yet have believed emphatically are blessed.

(Do not let us believe that this blessedness is unattainable This blessedness is linked forever with faith and God deserves such faith of us. Can we only believe Him as far as we can see?) Thousands of saints have rendered and are rendering such faith. Why then are we so cast down? Why were we not believed in Him? Thomas became absolutely certain. It is my firm conviction that he (like any other) man if any man is willing to do his will, he shall know. However, little you may believe at this present moment, if you will be loyal to what you do believe, if you will follow the light that you have it will bring you unto the Saviour. (Horace Bushnell) while a student at Yale was attending a meeting. He did not feel that he could come out on the side of Jesus Christ for he did not believe in Christ. It seemed one day that his (conscience spoke) to him and said, What then do you believe? He said, I believe there is an absolute difference between right and wrong, was the answer. His conscience said, Have you ever put yourself on the side of the right to follow it

regardless of consequences? His answer to that was, I have not. But I will. So Horace knelt down in the room and dedicated himself to the service of the right and what was the result? After he had been a preacher of the gospel in Hartford, Conn. for 47 years, he said, Better than I know any man in Hartford, I know Jesus Christ.

And though as Bishop Hall says, It is a good rule to try first and then to trust. But you know with God it is contrary. It is just the opposite. We must first trust Him as the most wise and omnipotent and merciful God, and then try Him afterwards. You see, by constant sight the effect of the object seemed to grow less and we feel less of the power of the object. Faith makes the invisible things visible. Absent things present. Things that are very far off to be very near to our souls.

It would grieve a father to see his own son come on the court ~~bench~~ and bear witness against him and charge him of some untruth in his words. Worse than if a stranger should do it. Because the testimony of a child though when it is for the vindication of parent it may lose some credit in the opinion of those that hear it. It seems to carry some more probability of truth than that another that is a stranger should say something against him. But think of this, Christians, again

and again by the unbelief they bear false witness against God. And if they are a child of God speaking no better the Heavenly Father and presenting Him no better character in the world, it is no wonder that it is hard to confirm the thoughts of God in their heart. And it is no wonder that they live such poor sorry lives for His namesake.

But now we come back to ~~what~~ He says, blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed. I close with this illustration of a young lad who was coming through the dark home on a horse. It was a long ways 8 or 10 miles away from home. He lost his way and about midnight he decided he'd just go to sleep on the ground. But as soon as he had dismounted the lightning began to flash and a storm approached. So he decided to mount up and to ride on through the dark. At least as far as he could travel through the forest. And he said I saw a speck of light in the distance and that light ~~looked~~ did not look at all like a sunrise. It was a small needle-point. And yet he followed it through the black darkness. A little later, he found that that light was shining from a window in his own home. A little later he found an anxious mother behind that light waiting for the homecoming of her boy.

Now he did not have very much light to begin with. It was meager. But as he followed it it led him home. Dear