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| Exodus 15:1-18 John 20:19-29 | Doubt Defeaters | Pinelands – 9am – 07/04/2024Thornton – 10:30am – 07/04/2024 |

***Solve the Mystery…***

In a closely contested race, the judges called it a ***photo finish.***

They looked at the photo to determine the winner,

and it was clear…

**Alfonso** crossed the line in first place,

just ahead of **Samuel.**

The judges were in total agreement,

**SO** the handed the **1st place trophy** to **Frank,**

who crossed the finish line third.

**Alfonso** and **Samuel** didn’t break any rules,

**so why did Frank receive the trophy?**

While you think on that one… here is another…

***Solve the Mystery…***

**Anthony** and **Cleopatra** are lying dead on the floor.

The window was open and there is

**water** and **glass** all over the floor.

**Brutus** is nowhere to be found.

There were no marks or injuries on **Anthony** or **Cleopatra.**

 **How did they die?**

**In the first Mystery… What you need to know is…**

**Alfonso** and **Samue**l are race horses.

**Frank** is a jockey and he was riding Alfonso,

and since **Alfonso** cannot hold the trophy

The Trophy was given to Frank!

**In the second Mystery… What you need to know is…**

**Anthony** and **Cleopatra** are goldfish.

The dog, **Brutus**, knocked over the fish bowl,

which broke and spilled water all over the floor.

**Here is another Mystery…**

On Friday night, a man dies.

He’s buried that same night.

On Sunday morning, His friends arrive at the **grave,**

only to ***discover* His body is GONE.**

**What happened?** *I think we know…*

 **BUT…** In case you don’t… **What you need to know is…**

 ***He was Jesus, the Son of God.***

**However** this Mystery has been debated for centuries.

There are a number False Doctrines that…

have tried to Solve this Mystery.

**Some say…**

- He was ***Raised Spiritually*** but **not Physically…**

 And his Body disappeared…

 **BUT…** **Thomas** saw the scars in his hands

 **Jesus** ate fish on the beach

- His **Disciples *stole* the body…**

 WOULD those same disciples…

be willing to be ***PERSECUTED*** and

eventually ***DIE*** for **a stolen Body.**

- ***Women went to the* Wrong Tomb…**

 **Then the…** **Officials** sealed the ***Wrong Tomb***

 **Soldiers** guarded the ***Wrong Tomb***

 **Angels** went to the ***Wrong Tomb***

**Disciples** inspected the ***Wrong Tomb***

**What we need to know is…**

**Jesus** was and is… **The SON OF GOD**

**Jesus…** Died upon the Cross…

 Taking the Sin of the world upon himself

 Became **SIN** even though He was **Sinless**

 Offered Forgiveness **to any and all…**

 Who accept the gift of His sacrifice

 Was **RAISED** back to life…

 Through the Power of Almighty GOD

 Seen by hundreds of People before his ascension

 *(especially his disciples)*

**BUT…** We still have **Doubts…** **Like THOMAS.**

 We still question the Mystery,

**We Doubt…** Our ***Faith.***

 Whether God hears our Prayers.

 Our God who allows evil.

Why God allows…

innocent people to suffer.

 Whether… **God acts** in our world

 Whether… ***God is real***

**Everyone** has ***DOUBTS,*** and…

***DOUBTS…*** are actually good for you,

**Because**… they drive you back to the

***RISEN LORD* for answers.**

Even **Mother Theresa** doubted…

She once wrote to her spiritual director,

***“When I try to raise my thoughts to heaven, there is***

***such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts***

***return like sharp knives and hurt my very soul.***

***Love — the word — it brings nothing.***

***I am told God lives in me — and yet the reality***

***of darkness and coldness and emptiness***

***is so great that nothing touches my soul.”***

Her spiritual director ***reassured her*** with this basic message,

***“The fact that you have doubts means…***

***that your faith is real.”***

**IF…** we have No doubts,

There is no testing… **THEN…**

 **THERE is…*****NO…*  Real Faith.**

**Thomas…** Gets a bad reputation for his Doubts…

 Even gets a nickname… ***“Doubting Thomas”***

**BUT…**  He was just as committed as the other disciples

 He had Gutsy moments…

 In **John 11:16**… He says…

 ***“Let us go with Jesus so***

***we may die with Him.”***

**Thomas…** He had bad moments…

 He also left Jesus at the cross

 Was also fearful after the resurrection

 He ***Doubted*** Jesus appeared

 In the Upper Room.

**THOMAS…** Like us*…* ***had…* DOUBTS**

**When we…** **DOUBT**  The ***MYSTERY of GOD…***

 The ***RESSURRECTION…***

Our ***FAITH…***

**THREE IDEAS** to hold onto… ***“3 DOUBT DEFEATERS”***

**DOUBT DEFEATER #1…**

**GUARD** yourself in LOW TIMES

In LOW TIMES… ***DO NOT…***

Make… Rash decisions.

 **Buy** a New Car / get Divorced

 ***Act impulsively***

SAME with **DOUBTS…**

 Recognise them for what they are… ***DOUBTS***

 ***DO NOT*** **react Impulsively**

**Thomas** was certainly in a LOW place…

His *Lord had been crucified.*

His *life was in jeopardy*

His *Hopes were dashed.*

**But fortunately,** he did not do anything rash.

Eventually he returned to his friends,

his fellow disciples.

**DOUBT DEFEATER #2…**

 **DRAW** strength from **OTHERS**

**Thomas** was **AWAY** and his ***doubts*** *began to* ***sway him…***

 **Isolation** magnifies ***OUR*** **Doubts.**

**We NEED each Other.**

**We need each other…**

When you feel least like going to church,

that’s **probably** *when you need it the most.*

When you most want to hide in your home,

that’s **probably** *when you need to force yourself*

 *to get out… and be with others.*

**Together** we are the **body of Christ,** and…

when one hurts, the whole body hurts;

when one celebrates, the whole body celebrates.

**We need to** **draw strength from one another**

**DOUBT DEFEATER #3…**

**MEET** the **RISEN LORD.**

That’s what did it for **Thomas…**

who then fell on the ground and proclaimed,

***“My Lord and my God!”***

**Scripture Indicates…**

**Thomas** didn’t need to touch Jesus’ scars.

For him, seeing was believing.

**EVERY DAY…** God gives us **evidence of his Existence…**

**We hear him** speak to our thoughts as we read scripture.

**We see his** beauty displayed in Creation

**We see his** love through the kind hand of a friend or spouse.

**We see his** redemptive work as *someone discovers…*

*hope or meaning or peace.*

**We see his** faithfulness day after day as…

we know **we do not walk this life alone.**

**SO…**

**Do whatever you can to… MEET the RISEN LORD**

There is a **MYSTERY to our Faith…**

 And **what you need to know is…**

 **JESUS** is the **Son of Almighty God**

 And **He is our SAVIOUR”**

**Let us pray:**

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for Thomas,

a real guy who had real doubts and

wanted evidence over blind faith.

Jesus, thank you that you met him right where he was,

and thank you that you will do the same for each of us.

Help us to take care when we are feeling down,

to surround ourselves with loving believers,

and to bring our doubts to you, the risen Lord,

knowing that you are more than sufficient in all situations.

 **Amen.**

**Exodus 15:1-18 The Song of Moses**

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

“I will sing to the Lord, because he has won a glorious victory;

 he has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.

The Lord is my strong defender;

 he is the one who has saved me.

He is my God, and I will praise him,

 my father's God, and I will sing about his greatness.

The Lord is a warrior;

 the Lord is his name.

“He threw Egypt's army and its chariots into the sea;

 the best of its officers were drowned in the Red Sea.

The deep sea covered them;

 they sank to the bottom like a stone.

“Your right hand, Lord, is awesome in power;

 it breaks the enemy in pieces.

In majestic triumph you overthrow your foes;

 your anger blazes out and burns them up like straw.

You blew on the sea and the water piled up high;

 it stood up straight like a wall;

 the deepest part of the sea became solid.

The enemy said, ‘I will pursue them and catch them;

 I will divide their wealth and take all I want;

 I will draw my sword and take all they have.’

But one breath from you, Lord, and the Egyptians were drowned;

 they sank like lead in the terrible water.

“Lord, who among the gods is like you?

 Who is like you, wonderful in holiness?

 Who can work miracles and mighty acts like yours?

You stretched out your right hand,

 and the earth swallowed our enemies.

Faithful to your promise, you led the people you had rescued;

 by your strength you guided them to your sacred land.

The nations have heard, and they tremble with fear;

 the Philistines are seized with terror.

The leaders of Edom are terrified;

 Moab's mighty men are trembling;

 the people of Canaan lose their courage.

Terror and dread fall upon them.

They see your strength, O Lord,

 and stand helpless with fear

 until your people have marched past—

 the people you set free from slavery.

You bring them in and plant them on your mountain,

 the place that you, Lord, have chosen for your home,

 the Temple that you yourself have built.

You, Lord, will be king forever and ever.”

**John 20:19-29 Jesus Appears to His Disciples**

It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Jesus and Thomas

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (called the Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

Thomas said to them, “Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting, and believe!”

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus said to him, “Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!”