17th Sunday after Trinity
11th in a Series on the Twelve Apostles
Rolling Meadows - 1964

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 11: 16 Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."
St. John 14: 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; ho can we know the way?"
St. John 20: 28 Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!"

THOMAS

Have you ever found that first impressions often prove to be false impressions? Isn't it true that often, when we really get to know people, we think of them quite differently than we did before? This is exactly what happens when w really get to know Thomas. People have been calling him Doubting Thomas for who know how many years. With a kind of disparaging tone in their voice, they refer t him as the disciple who refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. We might do well to note that there is no condemnation of Thomas in the Bible. There is no indication that Jesus was offended by his questions. Thomas is a man who needs to be taken out of the shadows of the world's contempt into the light of a true understanding. Of course he had a questioning mind. Don't you? Of course h had doubts from time to time. Don't you? The Bible doesn't call him Doubting Thomas -- we do. Thomas was apparently the type of man whom we call today, An Intellectual - with a probing, searching mind, restless at times and deeply troubl but only because he was so eager in his quest for the truth. I am personally grat ful that there was a Thomas among the Twelve, because there are so many people like him today. Thomas is proof for all the world that the questioning, probing, even doubting mind can find its answers in the living Christ.

He is called simply Thomas or Didymus. Both words mean the same thing: The Twin! Some traditions have invented a twin brother and others a twin sister f him. We don't know. The fact is that we don't know who he was or where he came from. While Matthew, Mark, and Luke only mention his name, it is St. John who give us his biography. The story of his life - as much as we know - can be written in three chapters.

The first chapter begins already as the brief ministry of Jesus is drawir to a close. Our Lord has become immensely popular. The people to whom He has spoken and to whom He has ministered dearly love Him. Many of them are quietly

hoping and planning to make Him their king. In Jerusalem, on the other hand, thin were different. Hatred was building up against Him. The leaders of the church were determined to do away with Him. Jesus' disciples were very much aware of all this. It was all so evident the last time they were in Jerusalem, Jesus was almost stoned to death in the Temple - and they were all greatly relieved when, at last, He had returned to the comparative safety of the land beyond Jordan. Suddenly a message came from Bethany. His dear friend Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha, was ill. For two days Jesus waited, and then He announced, We are going back to Judea. A storm of opposition greeted Him. They reminded Him of the hatred of the scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests - and of their frequent attempts to put Him to death. Jesus didn't seem to hear them. Quietly He said to them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep. Characteristically, the disciples did not understand. Lord, they said to Him, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover. Sleep is good for a patient. He must be getting better. Then Jesus spoke to them in their own language: Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him. It was Thomas who said, Let us also go, that we may die with Him. Had Simon Peter said it, we wouldn't be at all surprised. Peter was always making brash statements. But this time it was Thomas who was ready to lay his life on the line, Let us also go that we may die with Him.

Thomas did die a martyr's death, not that week in Jerusalem, but many years later, in far-off India. Ancient tradition says that he was run through with a lance while kneeling in prayer. Courage, loyalty, love - these are the qualities of Thomas. While the other disciples loudly pleaded with Jesus to save His own skin, thinking perhaps of their own safety, Thomas brushed all their fears aside and said, If this is what the Master wants, if this is what He must do, what are we arguing about? What does it matter, even if we die with Him? Let us also go, that we may die with Him!

How is it with us? When I see, with something of a sickening sensation in the pit of my stomach, what Christianity amounts to in the lives of so many today

- I wonder, sometimes, how many of us would say it: Let us also go, that we may di with Him. We know so much more than Thomas knew at that moment. We have been to Calvary and we have looked up at the Cross. We have heard Him pray, Father forgiv them, and we have heard the Father's answer, For His sake I will forgive yours sir and forget them. He died so that you may live forever. We know that this was all part of God's plan for our eternal redemption. We know it and we profess to belie it, and yet, how many of us - how many of the millions who clutter up the membersh lists of Christian churches, would say, I'm will to go and die with Him? How many of us would be willing to follow Christ to the Cross? How many of us would be her this morning, if we knew that there were even the slightest chance of our being put to death for worshiping Him? It was Thomas who proposed to the other disciple Let us also go, that we may die with Him.

Thomas was ready to die with Him, when many "Christians" today aren't ev willing to live with Him - except, perhaps, in certain very restricted areas of their lives. They may be Sunday morning Christians, or Christmas and Easter Christians, but they are very definite about the fact that Christ has nothing to say about their business or entertainment. They may even tell you is just so many wor I never let religion interfere with my private life. Others of us imagine that we have reached the height of discipleship when we attend church regularly or put a couple of dollars into the offering plate. I wonder how many of us are really capable of a discipleship that goes all the way. Thomas was willing even to die with Christ. Later on he did.

Chapter two of the Thomas story finds the disciples with Jesus in the Upper Room. Jesus is telling them that He is going away. Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's House are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?.... And you know the way where I am going. Thomas, groping his way into the world of faith, could contain himself no longer. Lord, he cried, we do not know where You are going; and how can we know the way? It was then that Jesus said to Thomas and

to them all, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me. Christ is still the answer - the only answer - even today. Does your doubting, probing, questioning mind ever feel like it has reached the end of the line? Do you ever feel like one who is lost in the dark? Have you ever wondered with Pilate, What is truth? Do you sometimes feel that the future holds nothing for you, nothing you can really be sure of except inevitable death? Then listen t your Savior as He says it to you too, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Trust in Him, count on Him for everything, and you will never be disappointed. He is your Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, your All-In-All. You can than Thomas for asking the searching question; and you can thank Jesus for His wonderfu answer.

The third chapter takes us to the golden days of the week after Easter. They were dark days for Thomas, for he had not been with the rest. From a distanc he had seen Jesus die. To believe now that He was suddenly and gloriously alive - it was too much for him. I must see Him for Myself, he said. Can we blame him? Would we have been inclined to believe? If someone were to come to you a few days after placing a loved one in the grave and say, I've seen him alive, would you believe it? We must not condemn Thomas too quickly. Chrysostom, the church father, has pointed out: Thomas doubted that we might have faith. A week later Jesus appeared to them again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, St. John tells us, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, 'Peace be with you.' The eyes of the Savior were searching for Thomas. Thomas, He said, put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side; do not be faithless, but believing. Thomas had been looking for evidence. Here it was in overwhelming reality. Almost before Jesus had finished speaking, Thomas was on his knees, at the nail-pierced feet, saying, My Lord and my God! It was all he could say, but it was enough. This was worship at its best, the worship of a once doubting but now believing disciple, and it was graciously accepted by the risen Lord. Then, from Jesus, came a gentle reproach: Have you believed because you have seen

Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe!

If you and I believe in Him today, then Jesus was talking, in that momen about you and me. We have not seen Him as Thomas did, but by God's great gift of a wonderful faith, we are aware of His living presence. We know Him as Lord and God and everlasting Redeemer. St. Peter has summed it all up for us, when he writ Without having seen Him you love Him; though you do not now see Him you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith yo obtain the salvation of your souls. This is the last beatitude: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. Amen.