

## **Easter People | Thomas (Greg Warren)**

Let's give them a hand, yeah. Man, I watch you worship, but when the kids come in, boom, it happens, man. It was so amazing watching your faces as these little ones help lead us in worship, right? They help lead us in worship.

And see, that's the beauty of it all, isn't it? I don't care if you're one year old or 100 years old. When you worship God, it pleases his heart. And so that's why all this is so beautiful.

I'm thankful to McKinley and Chrissy for helping out with all this. It's such a beautiful part of our worship service. Hope we don't take that for granted, by the way.

Hope we don't take that by granted. It's crazy that it's already Palm Sunday. I mean, it's crazy to me, and that next Sunday is Easter.

And didn't the month of March just start? I mean, it just kind of felt that way. And it seemed so long ago that we were talking about Mary Magdalene, the disciples, and then last week, Joseph of Arimathea. And we've been talking about Easter people, Easter people, people who were changed by meeting Jesus.

And today is Palm Sunday. And Palm Sunday, for those of you that might not know, commemorates when Jesus entered Jerusalem and was greeted by people waving palm branches. And it serves as a reminder for us today to celebrate and welcome Jesus into our hearts and to be ready to follow him.

And this celebration includes remembering Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem mentioned in the four Gospels. And Jesus entered the city knowing he would be tried and crucified. Now, this Friday at 6.30, we're gonna have a tenebrae service here at the church.

And tenebrae just means darkness. And this darkness, we're gonna reflect on the events of Jesus's death at 6.30 this Friday. But Jesus also knew he would rise from the grave and save us from sin.

And obviously, we're gonna celebrate that on Easter morning here at CSCC, two services next Sunday, 9.30 and 11, which includes a part of flowering of the cross. And you don't wanna miss it. And we want you to bring flowers and greenery.

A question was asked, are you gonna provide that or should we bring it? No, a part of your worship. See, this is the beautiful part of it, of getting flowers and greenery as you do it, it's your worship. It's your worship to say, I'm picking this so that when I come on Sunday, I can announce to the whole world that I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that he's risen in my life.

And so that's a part of our service next Sunday. Now, we're gonna have extra flowers for

our guests and maybe for those of you that might miss, but we do that because it's a part of our service and it's an act of our worship. Now, today we sing Hosanna.

We just finished singing Hosanna. And we watched and engaged with celebration as our kids wave palm branches. And if you're taking notes, because I think we need to know this stuff, instead of just saying words, we need to know what they mean.

The word Hosanna actually means, so if you're taking notes, it literally means save us please. Hosanna means save us please. And what is the significance of palm branches? In ancient times, palm branches symbolized goodness, well-being, grandeur, steadfastness, and victory.

And palm branches were regarded as tokens of joy, triumph, and they were used at festive occasions in the Old Testament. Now, spoiler alert here, you think all this is kind of crazy. Well, in heaven, we're gonna be waving palm branches.

Here it is, Revelation 7, nine through 10. I looked and saw a huge crowd of people, which no one could even begin to count, representing every nation and tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and waving palm branches. They cried out with a loud voice, salvation comes only from our God who sits upon the throne and from the Lamb.

We're gonna celebrate our salvation with joy because our Savior Jesus defeated sin, death, and the grave. Hosanna, Hosanna, hallelujah, which means praise the Lord, and we're waving palm branches as a sign of victory. We win, we win.

And can you tell I've already been studying for our fall series in Revelation? But what happened during this Holy Week, it's called the Holy Week or the Passion Week, will make you scratch your head. I mean, it really will. I mean, the people were shouting Hosanna, save us please, and waving palm branches and throwing their coats on the road before Jesus as a sign of respect, a sign of treating Jesus like royalty, and the crowds loved Jesus.

Couldn't get enough of Jesus. And then before you could say Hosanna, the crowds wanted to crucify him. Days apart from one another.

Talk about whiplash. And we scratch our heads and say, don't they get it? Who are these people? And yet, we're just like them. We love Jesus and even celebrate Jesus, and then we don't.

Let's be honest. God answers our prayers, and we shout Hosanna, save us please, or hallelujah, praise the Lord. And then when our prayers aren't answered the way we want, or he is silent, he is silent.

And no answers are coming in our way. We walk away and say, Jesus doesn't care about

me. Jesus has abandoned me.

Jesus doesn't have my back. So hey, let's try some other options besides Jesus to make us feel better. And we go back to the world's ways of dealing with life, and we doubt his goodness.

Now let's all take some inventory here of our hearts, and we've all done it. We've doubted. Maybe not as cut and dry as that, but we've done it.

We've doubted Jesus. We've doubted his words. We've doubted his ways will work.

We've doubted him when he's silent. We've doubted when things we are praying for aren't moving in the right direction, or maybe they're getting worse. We've doubted that he has the power to change our lives.

Doubted that he loves us, cares for us, has a presence in our lives, and our hearts start spiraling out of control. Have you ever been there? Have you ever doubted one person? I have. I'll be honest, I have.

And talk about doubt. This brings us to our next Easter person. Doubting Thomas.

I've asked Allison Glenn to come and read our scriptures for today. So Allison, if you would make your way up to the front and read the scriptures for today, I'd appreciate it. Good morning.

Greg's asked me to share a little about ourselves for a second. I'm Allison Glenn. I started attending here four years ago when I married my husband, Corbin, and moved down here.

We have a 20-month-old son, William, and a little girl coming in August. So we're very excited. Let's go ahead with our scripture.

It's John 20, 24 through 31. Now Thomas called the twin. One of the 12 was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said to him, we have seen the Lord. So he said to them, unless I see his hands, the print of the nails, and I put my finger into the print of the nails and put my hands into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days, his disciples were again inside and Thomas with them.

Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, peace to you. And he said to Thomas, reach your finger here and look at my hands and reach your hand here and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said to him, my Lord, my God. And Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not

seen and have yet believed.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. Thanks, Allison.

So glad for the Glenn family and for their presence. And I know Corbin and Allison are co-teachers. And I know that Allison are co-teachers in one of our classes and that Allison's on our ministry fair team that we got to be a part of.

So I'm so grateful for them. And many of these young couples with children, they're getting the commandment, right? We don't have to encourage that, right? You're getting the commandment to have children, all right? So we're thrilled by that. You know, Thomas was another Easter person.

Thomas the Doubter, his more familiar nickname, Doubting Thomas. And we'll get all that in a moment. But I believe he should be called, in my opinion, Thomas the Honest.

Because if we're going to pick one of the moments out of his life, why don't we pick one of his good ones? Thomas the Honest or Honest Thomas. And it has a nice ring, doesn't it? There's a need for greater honesty in our day, in the day where we don't know who to trust or what news is real or what news isn't. It's just confusing.

And what can we learn from Thomas? If you're taking notes, write this down. Thomas was honest. He had a great honest moment.

It's in John chapter 14, when Jesus was telling his disciples that he was going to leave the world and go to heaven. And apparently, as he was describing where he was going and how he was going to work, the disciples were all nodding their head and trying to look intelligent, like, I got this, I know what you're talking about. But then Thomas raised his hand up.

And in John 14, five, he says this. Thomas says, Lord, we don't even know where you're going. How can we know the way? Because Jesus has said this, you know, the guys, the disciples were going, yeah, that's right, we know where you're going.

We're smart, we're intelligent. We took notes where you were going. And Thomas goes, I have no clue where you're going.

And we have no clue on how we're gonna get there. And I can imagine Jesus looking at the rest of the disciples going, is that true? And them going, yeah, actually, we have no clue. This is just an etch-a-sketch.

And I wasn't even taking notes, I was just doodling. Thomas was honest, and because Thomas was honest, now catch this, Jesus answered him. Now, I want you to capture

this.

Because Thomas was honest, Jesus answered him. This next verse is one of the most quoted verses in all of the Bible, John 14, six. Jesus said to him, Thomas, to Thomas, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. And Jesus spoke this to Thomas, and don't miss this. Write it down, memorize it.

Jesus spoke this verse because Thomas was honest. Listen, when you're honest with God, he's gonna speak some earth-shaking things into your life, profound things into your heart. And don't forget it, all because we're honest with God.

He just wants us to be honest. And because of what I've just read, I've gotta ask us, how honest are we with God about where we're going? Are we shaking our heads yes? That we understand all of this just like the disciples thought they did when in reality, we have no clue? We're just doodling on an Etch-A-Sketch when we should be saying, I'm not getting this. I'm lost, I'm apathetic.

I don't know where I'm going with my life. And maybe you're saying, Greg, I can regurgitate all of the right answers to the questions you're asking, but honestly, I don't know where I'm going. I don't even know if I want to go.

I say, be like Thomas. He was honest, honest about who he was and where he was short on faith. He wasn't blowing smoke.

He was honest. And that's what we need in the church in America today. People who are transparent and honest about their relationship with Jesus because honesty is contagious and it opens the door for spiritual conversations.

Let me give you an example. Have you ever been in a small group and you're participating in your small group like normal and then someone out of the norm, they start shaking and start crying and the room just gets quiet. And through their tears and emotion, they spell out their honest heart to the whole group.

You ever been a part of that? You ever been a part of that? What happens? What happens? That person's honesty is contagious. It captures not only your mind but your heart and it opens the door for spiritual conversations and then people start opening up from their heart about their story and even though the class might not come up with a solution in that hour, what really happened is that we've engaged in spiritual conversations that take us to a deeper level, a level that looks like and is faith and man, Jesus loves it. He loves it when people have faith in him.

I do not know how to explain this more deeply than that. Jesus loves it when we enact faith and that's the beauty of God. As we share our burdens with our brothers and sisters

and we're not gossiping and judging them, what are we doing? We're walking with them and when the class time has ended, we're saying man, didn't God do something today in my heart? And why? Because we were honest.

Why do you think, and I know some people have asked, why do you think we offer altar calls or as we call them now, response times? Why? Why do we do it? Is it some psychology mumbo jumbo? Why do we offer altar calls after a message? Why? So we can be honest with God. To be honest with God just like Thomas so we can take time out of the hustle and bustle of life to know what it means that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and I can't say it better than Jesus. He said, if you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest.

Yes, that's right. Take the yoke I give you, put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble and you will find rest.

This yoke is easy to bear and this burden is light. I say, be like Thomas. I know people are carrying heavy burdens here every Sunday.

I know it. I look out at many of you today, many of you who have come forward after the service to share things, your honest hearts with Tammy and me and that that honesty you shared is contagious to our hearts and in turn, we get to share with you our honest hearts, our failures, our hurts, our disappointments but at the end of the day, our hope. We get to share that our hope is in Jesus and although we may not understand or comprehend the depth of your hurt, Jesus does and we're standing in the gap with you and your burden and when it's all said and done, it increases our faith in Jesus and I know it does you too and by the way, this happens every week here, at this church, not just with Tammy and me but for many of you who are doing the same things, for others in your small groups and outside these walls on a daily basis and we can all say from an honest heart, where else do we turn? For Jesus has the word of life and I say, be like Thomas.

Listen, every day and especially every Saturday night, I'm just gonna be honest with you because this message has really touched me as I've studied it. I wanna be honest with you. I've been asking and praying and begging God to pour out his spirit in this place.

I'm like, God, please fall down on this place. Get rid of all the fake and churchy language and do a work only you can do. So ultimately, men will say, that was God.

I'm praying God, get rid of the old wineskins that are brittle and man-made and pour the new wine of your spirit into our lives. Heal us of our sins and apathy. That's what I'm praying.

Praying that we'll be honest, just like Thomas, that we will be true to our faith and be broken people before him, that we will be hungry to sit at his feet, emboldened with

courage to face every circumstance with every passing moment, moldable in the hands of the Savior, ready to do his bidding, that he will increase our faith and change us by his great power and might, that salvation will come, that his power will be displayed for all to see. And I pray this every week. But it takes honesty.

Not all the churchy answers. And I told you I was gonna be honest. Yesterday, when I was preparing for this message and getting things together, Tammy and I came here yesterday afternoon.

Set some things up. And we came in here and I was setting things up. And as we were getting ready to leave, Tammy looked at me and she goes, we need to pray.

And we got right down right here on these steps and started praying. And I'm not saying that so you, I can pat myself on the back. But I've come to find out that most people don't know that pastors are humans.

That we have needs and hurts. And I think about Sam and Chrissy. And I understand that we don't grieve like people who have no hope.

We grieve with hope, but we are still people. And we have to get on our knees too. We have to go to the God of this universe and say, like David did in the Psalms, like, where are you? Are you tracking with me? So when we do altar calls, don't think, well, you're just doing it so you feel better about your preaching.

No, no, no. I feel better about it because you are getting honest with God and He is speaking to your spirit. Listen, people are, right now, are enamored about April 8th when we're gonna have this eclipse coming on.

They're enamored with it. And I hope you wear glasses because if you don't, you're gonna see differently. All right? I mean, I'm gonna tell you that right now.

So be safe about it. They're enamored that for two or three minutes or four minutes, wherever we are in the Metroplex in our area, that we're gonna see this total eclipse. And it's gonna be wonderful and great and I'm gonna be one of those people.

But people, listen to me. We shouldn't just be lifting our eyes to the eclipse. We should be lifting our eyes to the God of the universe who spoke these bodies into our world.

We're more excited about the eclipse than the God who spoke the moon and the stars into place. Really, we are. We get more excited about that than we do about coming in here and being honest before God.

And God desires your heart. I guess I'm preaching now. It just takes honesty, people.

Not all the churchy answers. You might say, God, I'm just the end of my rope. Where are you? God, I've been praying and things are worse.

What am I to do? God, I can't conquer this vicious circle of sin I'm in. Help me. God, I'm just apathetic.

I really don't care about anything anymore. I'm sleeping during the messages and I've quit going to Bible study. That kind of honesty.

And I think God is so powerful. And I think God and his spirit is so in touch with your hearts this morning that even as I preach this message, I believe he's drawing you into himself for Jesus to be your Lord and God, to increase your faith. And if people are honest and open to Jesus, and who knows, maybe someone standing in this room who needs to just stand right now where they are and say, I need Jesus to be my Lord and my God.

Or maybe they just need to come down front and get on their knees and be honest with God. It's okay if that happens, right? I mean, that is okay, right? I mean, we talk about this place being a safe place. Listen, it's not gonna bother me if you need to come up here and pray.

I guess I get some of that. You know, I know it's not the order of things, but I get some of that from my time at Beautiful Feet. Listen, they don't care.

They don't care about what anybody else thinks. They care about what God thinks. And if it moves in their heart, man, they're moving.

I mean, I weep at their obedience. I wish I was like that. And these are homeless people, people who have nothing.

I want our place. I want our church to be a safe place. I want it when, if we're singing music and you feel like, oh my gosh, God, I'm in awe of you and you wanna come down front and express that to him, why not? And I don't, you know, you may say, well, what are people gonna think of me? I do not care.

I ain't doing this. Sorry about the bad grammar, honey. I ain't doing this because I think that you will like me more or like me less.

Man, I love Thomas. He was honest. And I'm afraid that we have come in and out of here so many times that we forget that when we get honest with God, he will speak to our hearts.

Just like Thomas. Listen, we wouldn't have had John 14, six if it weren't for Thomas being honest, saying, hey, I don't get it. I don't get it.

Have you ever thought that? I just don't get it, God. The more I'm trying, the worse it gets. I'm surely not the only one in this room.

And I come in here and I go out and nothing's changed. And the reason nothing has



changed is because I'm just not honest. And yesterday afternoon, I had to get out on my knees.

And as my wife prayed, I had to get honest. Honest that I was mad, honest that I just didn't care. And I guarantee you, he will meet you where you are.

Thomas was honest. So Greg, when are you ever gonna get to doubting Thomas? I mean, we get his, he was honest, but what about the doubting part? This is the deal. If you write notes, there's hope for the doubter.

Thomas walked away from the cross. He did. Allison just read, he walked away.

And he famously doubted that it was true that Jesus had come back from the grave. And really what he did shouldn't be called doubt because doubt is saying I can't believe. And what Thomas said is, I won't believe.

So he should be called, if we're gonna nickname him, disbelieving Thomas. Because doubt is, I don't know. Doubt is natural.

That's why many of you shook your head and said, yes, I have doubted. And that's why Jesus, when he corrected them, watch this. Jesus didn't say, don't doubt, little Thomas.

Jesus said, don't be unbelieving. Don't choose to not believe. Don't set your heart to unbelief.

Instead, choose to believe. Now listen to me very carefully. I believe in God and I don't believe in God are both statements of faith.

And any way you live, you still choose faith. And being told, don't stay stuck in disbelief. And Jesus did not condemn Thomas for his doubts.

Jesus never says, you must have no doubts, but rather you must struggle with your doubts until you reach certainty. And when Jesus came and Thomas saw, he exclaimed, my Lord and my God. Does that sound familiar? Mary Magdalene said, where have they taken my Lord? There's a couple other things in the time we have left today I wanna talk to you about that I think is so important about this journey that Thomas was on, his absence and his unbelief.

They fueled one another. And the greater his absence, the greater his unbelief came. And what do I mean? I mean, the text tells us clearly that the 10 gathered on Sunday and Thomas was not present.

This is in verse 24, Thomas was not with them. And the disciples gathered like a bunch of coals to stay hot, like a bunch of wolves in a pack, like a bunch of sheep in a flock, like church members who hear there's free food. They gathered together.

But the Bible says Thomas was not with them, absent. Absent from the people who were there to rally him and encourage him and pray for him and make him accountable, Thomas was absent. And he caved to give into his unbelief.

But I believe he had an easier time doing that because of his absence. And that's a lesson for all of us to learn. This is not the time for lone wolf behavior.

It's not the time to be on our own. This is not the time to feel abandoned and therefore be absent. Hebrews 10, 25 says this, don't stop meeting together with other people, with other believers, which some people have gotten in the habit of doing.

Instead, courage each other, especially as you see the day drawing. I'm encouraged by this verse, thinking that the day is coming. And Thomas felt abandoned.

He felt alone. He felt like no one cared. And he felt like, why is God doing this and why is this happening? It brought all the chaos and confusion into the gathering of these people, which is meant to be a place of questions.

We talk again about this place being a safe place. Hey, it's okay to ask questions, okay? You go to your Bible studies class, it's okay to ask questions. But some people get the wrong idea about church.

Levi Lusko says this, but the problem is what we've wrongly thought is that churches were put together for people to come to polish our halos. Thinking that only we bring our best to God when we're forgetting that the best thing we ever had to offer God was our emptiness. That he might fill us with his glory, fill us with his power, fill us with his peace, that we will be loving and kind in our interactions.

So this is not a time to pull away. And don't you see how this applies to us? And then Jesus came. Don't you love it? Jesus came in the flesh because Thomas was honest.

Again, Jesus is responding to Thomas' honest heart. He's saying, I won't believe. And then Jesus came into their midst.

And so when Jesus says, I want to give you space to touch my wound, Thomas just says, my Lord and my God. He declared my Lord and my God, which is really cool because theologians say that this amounts to one of the most powerful and most concise declarations of deity anywhere in the New Testament. Which is pretty cool that the same guy who doubted the resurrection ever happened is also the same guy who opened his mouth and spoke the greatest, clearest demonstration of Jesus' divinity ever.

My Lord and my God. He didn't say the Lord, and he didn't say the Lord only. He said the Lord, my Lord, and my God.

And Thomas was bending his knees and submitting to his reign and salvation. You ever

feel abandoned by God? He is present when he feels far. So don't wait for your crisis, your crazy situation to resolve before you trust and believe him.

Declare in faith that he's present now, near when he feels far. And you will find coursing through your veins the blessings that come to those who believe even when they don't see. And can we by faith declare our allegiance to Jesus our Lord and our God no matter how he chooses to work in our situation? No matter how long it lasts, no matter what.

We know how this thing ends. It's Jesus on the throne of the universe. So please put him on the throne of your heart today in the midst of all you're afraid of.

Let's pray. I'm gonna ask our worship team to come up. We are gonna have an altar call today.

And all I'm asking you to do is to be honest. Be honest. Be honest with where you are with Jesus today.

Be honest of your need for him today. I'm gonna ask our staff to come forward during this song called Living Hope. And I pray that if you just need to come down and pray or even if you need to talk to a staff person that's great too.

But this is your time. This is your time to be honest with God. Where you stand.

I say, be like Thomas. Dear God, we love you. We thank you for this opportunity to get honest with you, to get real with you, to be real with you.

That you might speak volumes of your love to us and your care for us. I pray God that you will use this time to encourage us to make us more like you. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen.