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Andrew M. Davis Sermon Notes

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My Lord and My God

John 20:1-31

I. Thomas's Mountaintop Confession: "My Lord and My God"

A. We Come This Morning to the Mountaintop of the Bible

1. Picture the most spectacular vista you've ever seen from a lofty elevation
2. Perhaps you have seen some of the great mountain ranges of the world... maybe the Rocky Mountains or the Grand Tetons; maybe you've been able to travel to Europe and seen the craggy Alps in Italy or Switzerland; maybe you've seen the Karakoram Mountains in Pakistan or the Himalayan Mountains in Nepal; maybe you've seen Kilimanjaro in Kenya or the revered snow-capped Mt. Fuji dominating the plains of Japan
3. Perhaps you have not travelled as much and have not seen many mountains in distant lands... well enough, but have you stood on any summit at all and looked down from there at the valleys and lower mountaintops below your feet? Maybe you had rock climbing skills and used ropes to ascend... my admiration goes with you; perhaps you have merely hiked up by foot on a three-hour hike... like you can do on the backside of the Great Halfdome in Yosemite, if you have no fear of heights... they will strap you to a harness and you can hold onto a cable and walk right up to the edge of the Halfdome and look at the grandeur of the spectacular Yosemite National Park in California; maybe you are not athletic at all, and have merely driven up an auto road to the top of Mt. Washington in New Hampshire or maybe right close to home, you've driven up the road to the top of Mt. Mitchell on the Blue Ridge Parkway; you parked your car in the parking lot and walked

up a poured concrete walkway to the observation deck and looked out in all directions—North, South, East, West... standing on the highest peak east of the Mississippi, 6684 feet above sea level; maybe it was fall and the foliage was at its peak, and you could see fiery reds and radiant yellows and lush orange colored leaves as far as the horizon

4. What a rich vista you had that day! This morning, we come to the theological peak of all scripture... one might say that in John 20, we have so clearly portrayed the PURPOSE of all scripture... not just John's Gospel, but all the 66 books of the Bible combined... the salvation of the souls of sinners by faith in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ!!
 - a. To come to the point where you can say with a heart filled with love, with fear and trembling, and with faith what Thomas said when looking on the resurrected Jesus Christ

John 20:28 "My Lord and my God!"

- b. To realize that this is what all preaching is for, all Bible reading, all Christian parenting, all the translation of the Bible by Wycliffe missionaries, and the dissemination of Bibles to hotel rooms by the Gideons, and all the Bible studies on college campuses, and all the VBS lessons taught to children... all scripture ministry has one central purpose

2 Timothy 3:15 to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

As John wrote about his own Gospel:

John 20:31 ... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name

My purpose this morning is to preach the resurrection of Jesus from the words of John 20 so that everyone who hears me may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God... that you may make Thomas's confession: "My Lord and my God!" and in so doing that you may have life—eternal life—in Christ's name!!

B. Easter Sunday... Resurrection Sunday... Worldwide

1. All over the world, people are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ
2. Our circumstances in this extraordinary year—2020—have never been more bizarre; ordinarily I would have said “All over the world, people are GATHERING to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”
3. But because of the coronavirus pandemic, it has seemed best to church leaders all over the world to refrain from public assembly
4. Certainly there are many gathering in small numbers... but many churches have resorted to live-streaming our words
5. No matter! God will, we trust, soon put an end to this scourge and we will be able to meet together again, face to face
6. In the meantime, we have all we need for heartfelt Resurrection Day celebration: the Word and the Spirit!!

C. “Doubting Thomas”... the Man Who Missed Sunday Evening Service

1. The focus in this text is one of the Twelve Apostles... the man who because of his statement here is known as “doubting Thomas”

John 20:24-25 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

2. We are not told why he wasn't there; but we are told of his clear unbelief
3. This is no small thing, because all the other ten apostles testified to him that they had seen the Lord; so also the women and the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus
4. Even more significantly, Jesus had told them again and again that these things would happen

Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Matthew 17:22-23 When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men."²³ They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

5. And most significantly, the Old Testament scriptures plainly stated it... this is why he rebuked the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:25-27 "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"²⁶ Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

6. But this is more significant... for Thomas was chosen by the Lord to be an eyewitness of his life, his words, his ministry, and especially his bodily resurrection from the dead

Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

Acts 1:21-22 it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,²² beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

7. Thomas had a whole life of preaching the gospel ahead of him... but he would be disqualified if he refused to believe in the resurrection

D. Jesus Stoops to His Weakness

1. Jesus miraculously appears as he did the week before

- a. The previous week, the disciples were a trembling mass of feelings... fear of the Jews, wonder at what had happened at the empty tomb... still not sure what to think
- b. Jesus had come right through those same locked doors and stood in their midst with a strong evidence of his triumph over death
- c. Now, a week later, Jesus does it again!

John 20:26 Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

- 2. Then, he goes right over to Thomas to heal him of his unbelief

John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

- 3. Jesus had every right to be angry with Thomas and to rebuke him
- 4. But “the bruised reed he will not break, and the smoldering wick he will not snuff out”

I love what Charles Spurgeon said about this sweet demeanor of Jesus toward doubting Thomas:

“Our Lord here shows us that he has a condescending care for those who lag behind. Thomas is a week behind everybody else, yet his Lord has not lost patience, but waits to be gracious. The other ten apostles have all seen the Lord, and been well assured of his resurrection for the last seven days; but that is no reason why the late-comer should be left out in the cold. Our Lord does not leave the rear rank to perish. We know that in the wilderness the Amalekites slew the hindmost of the children of Israel; but when King Jesus heads the army, no Amalekites shall smite even the hindmost of his people, for the glory of the Lord shall bring up the rear. The walls of Zion enclose babes as well as veterans; the ark of our salvation preserves mice as well as bullocks; our Solomon speaks of the hyssop on the wall as

well as of the cedar in Lebanon; and the glory of the Lord may be seen in the preservation of the glowworm's lamp as truly as in the sustenance of the furnace of the sun."

So Jesus stoops to Thomas's weakness, and is ready to meet his test.

Notice he knows exactly what Thomas had said... he knows everything

Notice also how essential it was for Thomas as an apostle and a preacher of the resurrection to be a literal eyewitness. Jesus will not do this for anyone alive today, but Thomas had a unique role in redemptive history... he HAD to see the resurrected Jesus Christ with his own eyes; and also to touch him with his own hands

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

Luke 24:38-40 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.

This physical experience would be the basis of the gospel for all the generations to come.... And Thomas as one of the Twelve Apostles was afforded this unique privilege.

E. Thomas's Eternal Confession... the Mountaintop of Human Experience in this World

John 20:28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

1. There is no higher profession one can make concerning Jesus Christ
2. Many had given lower confessions of Jesus while he was alive... most especially "a prophet"

Matthew 21:11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Even the two disciples on the road to Emmaus said the same

Luke 24:19 Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.

Peter's great confession of Jesus in Caesarea Philippi:

Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

3. Thomas goes beyond this to a new phrase never before used of Jesus of Nazareth... MY LORD AND MY GOD

F. The Essence: The Deity of Christ, the Lordship of Christ

1. Thomas is confessing that Jesus of Nazareth, the man, is actually truly GOD... God in the flesh
2. This is the central truth of the Christian faith... we worship Jesus as God, as the Nicene Creed

the only Son of God,
 begotten from the Father before all ages,
 God from God,
 Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made;
 of the same essence as the Father.
 Through him all things were made.

3. We should not imagine Thomas was breaking the third of the Ten Commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"

As though Thomas were saying something like "Good God! Oh my Lord!"

- a. The Jews of the first century were extremely zealous, even superstitious about the name of Almighty God

- b. They would not pronounce the letters that made up God's name in the Old Testament
- c. Furthermore, the text says that Thomas said this TO JESUS...
"My Lord and my God!"
- 4. This is the first and clearest testimony to the deity of Christ in the Bible
- 5. And this is the testimony we must make by faith if we are to be saved

G. Jesus Accepts this Worship!!

- 1. It is one thing for a man to say something like this to Jesus... he might be wrong
- 2. Even the Apostle John fell down to worship an angel who showed him the visions of Revelation

Revelation 22:8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me.

- 3. BUT the angel stopped him IMMEDIATELY!!

Revelation 22:9 "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

- 4. So also in Acts 14 the pagans of Lystra brought sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas saying "The gods have come down to us in human form" But Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd to stop them

Acts 14:15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you.

- 5. But Jesus accepted this worship as right and proper... and effectively invites the WHOLE WORLD to join Thomas in this worship

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

H. My Deepest Desire: Everyone of you to make this same confession

John 20:29 blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

On what BASIS can anyone make such a confession??

II. The Evidence Supporting This Confession

A. The Physical Evidence

1. The empty tomb and all its evidence

John 20:1-8 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" ³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

2. This had all the physical evidence needed to prove a bodily resurrection... the graveclothes were wrapped around Jesus' dead body with myrrh and aloes... it would have been sticky and very difficult to unwrap; but the Greek implies that the graveclothes were wholly undisturbed in their original position; so also the head cloth, folded up by itself... the physical evidence screamed RESURRECTION, for no grave robbers would have taken the time to leave the clothes there

3. BUT we the succeeding generations have NO ACCESS to the empty tomb; if you go to Jerusalem, you could visit the Church of

the Holy Sepulchre, the Roman Catholic site since the 4th century; or the Protestant contestant—the Garden Tomb, discovered in 1867; but there's no way to prove either claim

B. The Personal Evidence

1. All told, there were ten appearances of the resurrected Lord to eyewitnesses
2. Five personal appearances one the first day
 - a. Mary Magdalene

John 20:14-18 she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

- b. the other women at the tomb (Matthew 28)
- c. The two disciples (Cleopas and another) on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24)
- d. To Peter (1 Corinthians 15)
- e. And to the Ten Apostles in the upper room

John 20:19-23 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the

Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

3. Now, a week later... to Thomas and the rest
4. These personal appearances form the strongest evidence possible for those that were actually there... all their five senses were engaged; they were able to touch him and see that he was not a ghost; he was able to eat some broiled fish in front of them; it was very physical and totally convincing
5. BUT we will NEVER be able to see the physical Jesus with our own eyes; we are not chosen for the role of an apostle, an eyewitness of Jesus

C. The Scriptural Evidence

1. John's vital statement (John 20:9)

John 20:8-9 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

2. Just like Thomas:

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed."

3. The rest of the world must believe based on scripture alone

John 20:29 blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

4. That is sufficient... the Old Testament prophecies

John 20:9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Luke 24:32 "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

5. John's own written evidence... this very Gospel!

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

6. Simply put: you will believe in Jesus and his resurrection based on scripture's testimony, or you will never believe at all
7. No possibility of inspecting the physical evidence
8. No expectation of Jesus allowing you to touch his hands and his side
9. As Peter said plainly...

1 Peter 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

10. We are justified by faith, not by sight

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

2 Corinthians 5:7 for we walk by faith, not by sight

D. The Spirit's Evidence

1. Jesus blew on them and said "receive the Holy Spirit"

John 20:22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

2. The Spirit's work is the key to our salvation
3. The Spirit presses scripture into our minds that we know what we must know, and into our hearts that we believe what we must believe
4. "Born by the Spirit"

John 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

III. The Blessedness of Making This Confession

A. Jesus' Words to Thomas

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

B. How His Words Extend to the Ends of the Earth and to the End of Time

1. From the moment Jesus ascended into heaven until now, this blessing has extended from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria and now has reached the ends of the earth
2. None of us has seen Jesus... we are among the blessed that have NOT SEEN and yet have believed

C. The Nature of this Blessedness

1. Forgiveness of sins

John 20:23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven

2. Peace with God

***John 20:19-21 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"
²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you!"***

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

Colossians 1:21-22 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

3. "Life in His Name"

- a. John wrote his entire gospel that we might have LIFE IN HIS NAME

4. Life Rather than Death

- a. Present spiritual death
- b. Eternal death in hell

5. "Life in his name" = Quality of Life Now

- a. John 3: "Born again"
- b. John 4/John 7: Springs of living water flowing from within us
- c. John 6: Bread of life
- d. John 8: Light of the world
- e. John 10: the Good Shepherd... richly pastured, strongly protected, wisely led... "I have come that they may have LIFE and have it ABUNDANTLY!!"
- f. John 11: the resurrection and the life
- g. John 12: a life of honored service to the King
- h. John 13: feet washed
- i. John 14: the way, the truth, and the life
- j. John 17: covered in prayer by your Great High Priest

6. Eternity of Life in Heaven

- a. Described by the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation
- b. Revelation 21:4 No death, mourning, crying, pain
- c. The New Jerusalem: radiant with the glory of God; the gates standing open continually, the glories of the nations coming in continually
- d. The New Heaven and New Earth: a glorious, resurrected world to explore
- e. The Throne of God in the center of the City, the river of the water of life flowing, the tree of life nourishing health for eternity

IV. The Worldwide Commission Concerning This Confession

John 20:21-23 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

A. Jesus Wanted this Blessedness to Extend to the Ends of the Earth

B. He Commissioned His Apostles to Go

1. The Father sent the Son into the world... now the Son sends us to the ends of the earth
2. Five versions of the Great Commission
3. Called to make disciples of all nations
4. To witness to this great blessedness of peace with God through the forgiveness of sins, resulting in a rich full blessed life

C. We Do Not Forgive Sins... but we proclaim in Christ's name the forgiveness of sins based on the gospel

D. We also proclaim that people are still in their sins based on the gospel

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

V. Applications

A. Celebrate the Joy of the Resurrection!

B. Find Salvation Through Faith in Christ

C. Christians: Witness to the Forgiveness of Sins by the power of the Holy Spirit

1. The coronavirus has given us a unique opportunity to proclaim this message
2. People are afraid of death... afraid of the economy... afraid for the future
3. There is no better message than this one
4. God has orchestrated events in everyday life to prepare people for salvation
5. Let's be God's messengers... "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"

John 4:34-35 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.