



- **Title slide – Easter Day**

I WANT to believe

When I was 11 years old, scientific evidence came out that Apples were bad for you. There's cyanide in the seeds and some other scientific stuff! Well, that was enough for me not to eat my apple for lunch. Because I didn't like apples! I never doubted that as fact.

When I was later told as a child that bananas could also be bad for your health, I ignored it! I like bananas. And therefore I had serious doubts about this new evidence.

Sometimes we're told things that we WANT to believe. And so it's **easy** to believe. Sometimes we're told things we DON'T want to believe, and it's hard to believe. So we doubt.

Doubt is all around us. What we believe strongly, someone else may not believe at all. Just ask a few Christians what they think about Evolution and the Big Bang Theory and you'll get lots of different ideas on what people **believe** and **think**. And you'll hear a lot doubts.

No matter what we WANT to believe, sometimes things are just true.

- **Confusion. Belief. Doubt**

On the first Easter morning, John 20 tells us that Jesus rose from the dead. And people respond differently to this on the day. There are three main responses we see here. There is **belief**. There is **confusion**. And there is **doubt**.

Mary Magdalene thought the body had been moved, so she was confused and upset because she couldn't find it.

Peter and John run to the tomb and they saw, and believed that he had risen. Even though they didn't completely understand.

Then Jesus appears to Mary and she believes.

Then Jesus appears to the disciples and they believe!

Then Thomas hears about it, but he doubts. Verse 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."

A week later, Jesus appears again, this time in front of Thomas. Verse 26:

- **26** *Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"* **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."* **28** *Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

Some are confused. Some believe straight away. Others doubt and will only believe when they SEE. There is confusion. There is belief. There is doubt.

III – Have you ever got a credit card statement, opened it up and said: "I CANNOT BELIEVE THIS!" And you go through it carefully and release that you DID spend all that money this month!? Because there it is right in front of you. And you investigate it and despite your doubts, unfortunately, it's correct. Even though you don't like it!

When it comes to Easter morning, I think all three of these responses are put before us in John 20 because they are **honest** responses.

It's an honest response to be confused. Because if you go to a grave and the body is gone, it would be confusing. You wouldn't just say: "Oh, he must be alive and walked out!" You would probably think: "Oh, they've moved him. But where?!"

And instant belief without seeing the body is also honest, because no doubt, Peter and John WANTED to believe he had risen.

And of course you would expect people to believe when they see the evidence right in front of them. The disciples see Jesus right there. And they believe.

But doubt I also an honest response. What Thomas is being asked to believe is ridiculous, because dead men don't rise. But then he sees, and believes.

- **WHY does it matter?**

So why do we believe today? And why does it matter? Verse 30:

- **30** *Jesus performed many other 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 Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

These things are written for us **that we may believe**. That we may hear the eyewitness accounts, that we can study the history books, and look at the evidence, and come to understand and believe an objective truth. That Jesus really **did** live on this earth, that he really did performed miracles, and that he really did died and rise again.

But why does it matter?

If I told you I had a cup of coffee this morning, you would probably believe me. Without evidence. But if I told you I had 12 cups of coffee this morning, while I was hang gliding off the roof of the Eastwood centre, you **may not** believe. You may doubt. You may ask for evidence. Because it's extraordinary. It's not expected. And you may even just call me an idiot and walk away. But in the end, it doesn't really matter. You can ignore my statement because it doesn't really make a difference to your life, apart from the fact that you may think I'm a lunatic.

But if someone says to you: "I can raise anyone from the dead" then wouldn't we want to hear the evidence? Because THAT matters! Because THAT fact impacts our life. If someone can raise people from the dead, that changes our whole perspective on life and death.

We often spend a lot of time trying to convince people of the facts about the resurrection. But why? Because it matters! Jesus' death and resurrection isn't just something we can walk away from.

The resurrection says that death is not the end. Verse 31:

*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, **and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

These things are written so we will believe, and trust in Jesus, follow him, **and have eternal life with him.** We're being asked to consider this event because through this resurrection, Jesus claims to offer eternal life.

And I want to say just two things about how that affects us.

First, if you don't believe, have you considered how significant this is if it's true? That God has the power over life and death. That he's shown that death is not the end. That he offers eternal life to those who put their trust in Jesus. Rather than try to convince you that it happened, let me just ask you to consider, if it is true, how big an impact that would have on your life – to know that there is life after death? If you doubt, then like Thomas, it's worth a second look.

And to those who **do** believe, let me ask you this: "So what?"

What does it matter? If you believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus, has it changed your life? Has it changed **every day** of your life? How? If we believe and nothing for us changes, what's the point?

As we come to grasp the truth of today's celebration, the reality of life after death, we may be confused, or we may doubt, or we may believe. One response we do not see is the response of doing nothing. Mary doesn't see the empty tomb and then go back home to cook breakfast. Peter and John don't walk to the tomb. They RUN!

The disciples didn't say "Hello Jesus!" They were **overjoyed**. Thomas didn't say: "Nup. That's rubbish." He said: "Show me!"

They responded because this is something that matters. That's why we're here today, isn't it?

- ***Do you have a scar?***

I have a few. Bike accident scar, age 8. Knife cut age 12. Operation scar age 14. Skin cancer scar age 36.

I love these scars. They remind me of my life. This one reminds me of cancer being removed from my body. This reminds me of the time I stood up to a bully at school who was three times my size. This reminds me of bike rides with my family in Parramatta Park when I was 10. This one reminds me of when I sliced my hand open and went next door to my neighbour and they looked after me.

Every scar has a story doesn't it? They are stories of our life. And even though each one of my scars caused me pain, they also remind me of how I came through that pain.

I know not all scars are joyful. Maybe you have some scars that still bring you great pain. Physical scars. Emotional scars.

The scars of Jesus are **so** painful, but they are also **so** joyful. Because his are the scars that overcome ALL of our own.

They are scars of great pain, but also of great truth, great hope and great salvation. They are scars that bring billions of people around the world today together.

Most importantly, these scars of Jesus are the marks of **your** forgiveness through **His** death on the cross. These are the scars that tell you that God loves you so much that he sent his only Son to **die** for you.

And these scars of Jesus say: "There is life after death". These are not the scars of a dead man. These are the scars of a living God! These are these scars of great pain that bring great joy!

Prayer...

1Early 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. 2So 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!"

3So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

6Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8Finally 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.) 10Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15He asked her, "Woman, 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."

16Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "*Rabboni!*" (which means "Teacher").

17Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18Mary 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.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

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

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

Jesus Appears to Thomas

24Now Thomas (also known as Didymus

24 *Thomas* (Aramaic) and *Didymus* (Greek) both mean *twin*.

), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25So 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."

26A 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!" 27Then 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."

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

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

The Purpose of John's Gospel

30Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

31But these are written that you may believe

31 Or *may continue to believe*

that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.