

It's very easy for us to be kind of hard on the disciples, because we wonder why they do the things that they do. Why did the disciples, for example, seem to never quite understand what Jesus is talking about? They had him right there. They should have been able to figure it out. Right? They should have been able to know what Jesus meant. And yet how often do they struggle, struggle to understand what Jesus is talking about? Or maybe we're hard on Peter for denying his Lord when the world was pressing in on around him, denying the Lord he had known for three years, the Lord that He had been with time and time again and knew quite well. And yet Peter denies Jesus when the time comes. And maybe we would be hard even on Judas, who betrays his Lord, betrays him who had done so much good, betrayed him whom he knew had done nothing wrong. Or maybe we're even hard on poor Thomas in our reading for today, Thomas who refuses to believe the things that he has heard, even when it comes from the mouth of the other eleven disciples.

Yes, it is pretty easy to be hard on the disciples until we recognize, Christians, that we're not all that different from them. We have the same sinful nature and the same struggles that they had, so that all of the things that they have done are frankly the things that we have done too. Because how often have we struggled to understand what the Lord is talking about when he speaks to us in the scriptures? How often have we denied Jesus when the world presses in around us, even when it's not pressing in all that hard? How often have we even betrayed Jesus by our own sins, walking the way that he would not have us go? Or, with Thomas, how often have we struggled to believe the things that God has told us, struggled to believe the very clear Word of God? Yes, Christians, we are not all that different from the disciples. We share the same struggles and share the same sins.

So when we come and look at what is happening to Thomas, we might even be a tad bit envious of Thomas. Because Thomas doubted, just like we so often do, but when he doubted Jesus gave him a proof, a proof that what he was saying was in fact true. He allows him to touch his side and to put his hands into his own hands as a testimony to the truth of the Word that he had heard. And when we misunderstand what Jesus is doing by giving this to Thomas, we ourselves might look for some other kind of proof, some other kind of reassurance for our doubts in the midst of all of our struggles.

Because how often, Christians, have we looked towards our own thoughts to give us comfort and assurance? Our own thoughts about who God is or what we would like him to be, thinking that that would give us comfort in the midst of our troubles? Or how often have we looked towards our own experiences, looking for some voice of God, or at least some voice that we think is God's, thinking that that would give us the comfort and the assurance that we need? Or how often do we look also to the world and look for the traditions and the opinions of men, thinking that they will give us some kind of certainty, some kind of comfort in the midst of our troubles? Yes, it's very easy, Christians, to look outward or inward, looking for some kind of assurance when we doubt what God has said.

But I ask you, do these things actually give us the comfort that we think they do? When we're dealing with our own thoughts about God and what we think he should be like and the things that we think would be appropriate for him, do we actually have the God of the Scriptures? Or do we rather have a God that is more comfortable, a God that is easier to understand, but ultimately not the God of all? And when we're dealing with our own experiences and the things that we look for within ourselves, do we know that the voice which we hear is in fact the voice of God, the voice which will comfort us in distress? How do we know that it's not the voice of the devil? How can we know the difference? Or when we're looking towards the opinions of men, looking for some sort of certainty in what others have said, how often do those contradict one another? How often do those fight against one another, so that we can't find any kind of certainty? We can't find any kind of assurance that anybody is speaking the truth. Yes, Christians, when we look inward or outward, looking for our assurance, we're going to be

pretty hard pressed to find it.

So what should we do then? Where can we find this assurance in the midst of our doubt? We need only look to where God has in fact promised to be, that is, within the Holy Scriptures themselves. Because, as St. John tells us, "These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Yes, dear Christians, in the very Word of God, the Scriptures themselves, the very Bible, we have that assurance. We have that confidence that we are looking for. Because the Bible is God's Word. It's not the word of men. It's not the word of our own experiences. It is the living voice of the Holy Spirit. And when we turn towards that Word and dwell in that Word, we will have that comfort and that assurance that we are looking for.

When we struggle with looking towards our own thoughts and wondering whether in fact that is God Himself, we don't have to worry about that. Because we have in the Bible God's own revelation about himself. It is the truth, without error, without any mistakes, and it is perfect. So we don't have to wonder or doubt. And we don't have to look towards our own experiences either, wondering whether we have the voice of God. Because the Holy Spirit speaks in that Word, speaks in the Bible, so that we know that we have the very voice of God. And we don't have to look towards the traditions of men either and trying to figure out who is telling the truth, because Jesus speaking to us in this Word, in the Bible, is in fact the way, the truth and the life. He is the voice of God speaking to us today in that Word.

So Christians, when we are struggling with sin, turn to the Word, the very living Word of God, because that is our surest weapon in the war against sin. It is the sword of the Spirit, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to bone and marrow, because it is the living voice of God that will lead us to everlasting life. And when we are struggling with doubts, turn to the Word, the living Word of God, which will cover over all of our doubts. Because here we have the voice of God speaking to us, comforting us in the midst of every distress. Christians, cling to that Word! Cling to the Word as it has been written to you in the Bible. Because that Word is the way to life. That Word is the way to comfort. That Word will comfort us and assure us in all of our doubts. Cling to him, Christians, who has spoken to you in the Bible, and he will never forsake you.

To him be the glory, now and forever. Amen.