

Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, April 12, 2026
"A Real Reason for Hope"

Young at Heart Message

Many of you have heard me ring my singing bowl before – we have even used it during church occasionally.

For those of you who have heard it, you have heard me hit the side of the bowl – usually three times.

But, would you believe me if I told you that I can actually make the bowl sing?

If I don't show you that I can make it sing after I just told you I can, would you be as likely to believe me?

This is one of those things that most people would need to see to believe, especially because it's not something I have ever done before.

I could tell you, but considering you haven't experienced it before, you may or not believe me.

And even if you *did* believe me, you still might want *proof* that I can do it before you go telling everyone that your pastor can make a bowl sing.

So, do you want me to prove it?

The Message

As humans, we are naturally inclined to be skeptical when people tell us something that seems unlikely, too good to be true, or impossible. Sometimes we are skeptical of things that are totally plausible and we need to see it to believe it.

I know that Thomas has gotten a bit of a bad reputation. He's the 1st-century equivalent of a meme.

When someone doubts the truth of something, they might even be referred to as a "Doubting Thomas."

And yet, the truth is, most of us would want some kind of proof too.

For example, imagine we were all doing something here at church, and a group of you said “Pastor Jamie, we are going to go for a quick walk. Would you like to come?”

I say “no thank you, I have a few things to finish up here.”

The group leaves, and a few minutes later, someone comes running back in and says, “Jamie, you’ll never believe what we saw…”

“A MOOSE! Standing just along the side of the building!”

Do I believe this at face value, or do I need to see it for myself?

Of course I need to see it for myself. How do I know this group isn’t just perpetuating the Canadian practical joke that moose actually exist in the wild?

Of course, this is a silly example. But, when the disciples tell Thomas that Jesus *returned from the dead, appeared among them, and showed them his hand and side wounds*, it makes sense that he would be skeptical.

And, it makes sense that when Jesus appears again while Thomas is there, that Thomas would want to see his wounds too considering the others had received that proof.

Jesus allows Thomas to receive “proof” too, although he does then ask him if he believes only because he has seen Jesus.

In other words, would he have believed if he had not had the opportunity to receive proof?

Thomas is in a bit of a conundrum, honestly, and I don’t think we would necessarily respond differently.

All the other disciples got to see Jesus’s wounds. Thomas was not there at that time.

Despite the fact that they told him, it is an incredibly unlikely, seemingly impossible reality.

So it makes sense that Thomas would also want the same proof.

I appreciate that Jesus doesn’t reprimand him for his “unbelief” or “disbelief,” but instead allows him to receive the same proof that the others received.

His reminder that others will need to believe without proof is still valid.

And actually, we see this truth in the 1 Peter passage we heard today.

Peter was one of Jesus's 12 disciples – also known as the Apostle Peter.

Peter is speaking to a group of people who have never seen Jesus. He says:

“You have never seen Jesus, and you don't see him now. But still you love him and have faith in him, and no words can tell how glad and happy you are to be saved. This is why you have faith.”

If, when the church group saw the moose outside and came in to tell me, by the time I went outside it was gone, I would have no choice but to believe their story.

I could remain skeptical, but why would someone go through the trouble of running inside to tell me there's a moose outside?

Similarly, people could have remained skeptical about Jesus, his story, and especially his resurrection. But, it would be a pretty big and well-orchestrated lie for all of the Apostles to tell if it was not true.

And, the story likely never would have persisted as long as it has if it was a grand scheme the Apostles made up.

So, Peter is reminding us that even though we have not personally seen Jesus “in the flesh,” our faith in him, his ministry, and his story makes sense.

And, we know that we *do* see Jesus! Perhaps not in the flesh, but we see Jesus in our lives all the time.

We talk to Jesus through prayer, and Jesus responds, although sometimes not in the way we expect or in the time we expect.

We look around us and we see Jesus in the people we love, in small acts of kindness, in the beauty of the natural world, and in so many other parts of our lives.

When we are metaphorically out in the boat, just off-shore and unable to make it home, Jesus is right there in the boat with us.

He is also on the shore, ready to welcome us home and encouraging us to just keep rowing.

He is in all things, in all people, in all circumstances – ready and waiting for us.

He is ready to show us his wounds if that's what we need to know he is there.

Sometimes, I think Jesus is waiting for *us* to be ready. Are we ready to have total faith in him? Are we willing to accept his resurrection without "proof?" Are we ready to *allow* Jesus to change us?

As you leave here today, you are being invited to overcome doubt. You are being invited to believe. You are being invited to witness all the ways in which Jesus shows up in your life.

May you know, without a doubt, that Jesus is with you.

May you feel unconditionally loved, and may you experience that love on a daily basis.

May you come to Jesus with open hearts and open minds, ready and willing to accept the truth of his life, ministry, and resurrection and ready to allow that truth to change you.

To open you, to comfort you, to support you, and to offer you the kind of love that only Jesus can.

May you know this truth with your whole being. Amen.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to earth so that we have living proof of your love. Thank you for allowing him to teach us with such grace and love. We are endlessly grateful for the love you show us, and we pray that you would continue to demonstrate your love over and over again from generation to generation to generation. Amen.