

PS's Ponderings



Several years ago my family took a trip to Alaska. One of the things I was most looking forward to seeing in Alaska was brown bear in the wild. We took one of those tours to a river full of salmon where we were "guaranteed" to see brown bears, but guess what? While we saw salmon carcasses all over the riverbank — no bears! Apparently a few were there a couple of minutes before us. Yep, the tour before us had all the action, but we missed out.

Ever had one of those experiences? You looked away just when the whale breached. Everyone else saw the shooting star, but you. You hit the bathroom when the grand slam was sent screaming over the fence. Missing out on a great moment that others witness can be heartbreaking. But you know what? You and I can take heart that we didn't miss an opportunity to witness a great event as big as the one Thomas missed. While all of Jesus' closest followers were huddled in a room together grieving the death of Jesus, Thomas stepped out of the room for some reason. Perhaps he had a pressing errand to run. Maybe he wanted to do a little recon to see if people were searching for Jesus' followers. Possibly he just needed some air... but while he was out, Jesus appeared among the others... ALIVE! Talk about the ultimate missed opportunity to see something wondrous!

When the poor fellow walks back into the room, it is in bedlam. Everyone had gone crazy. Where before there had been deep sorrow, now joy filled the room. They were shouting and laughing — Jesus was alive, they claimed. He had appeared right among them! He had spoken to them... encouraged them... affirmed the presence of the Holy Spirit upon them!

Well, Thomas refused to believe them. Perhaps he thought they had cracked under the pressure, or maybe he just tended to be a skeptic, but he said, "Unless I see... I will not believe." Just one week later, while Thomas was with all of the other disciples, Jesus appears among them again. I LOVE what happens next... Jesus has eyes for one person and one person only... Thomas. Jesus' words for Thomas? "Stop doubting and believe."

You see it, don't you? Jesus came back that second time... just for Thomas. Jesus' words were not an admonishment... they were intended to strengthen... for he knew the road that Thomas would walk. Thomas would preach the Gospel message of Jesus in Greece and as far away as India. He was martyred for Jesus by being impaled upon a spear. The one who had at one time doubted, became one who would die for his Lord.

I want to be like Thomas. I know... others might pick another a more flashy apostle like John or Peter. I mean, Thomas didn't write any of the bible, and his role in Jesus' Kingdom appears minor, but the guy was raw in his authenticity, transparent in his doubts, and real with his faith. And he truly embraced Jesus' challenge to stop doubting and believe. May my heart ring with the same passion of Thomas' words in John 20:28 — "My Lord and my God!"