

JOHN 20:19-31

WANTING MORE

“We have seen Jesus!” “I will never believe you unless I see Jesus myself, and touch Him.” Coveting – it’s the sinful desire of wanting what others have, of wanting to take what others have, of not being content with what you have, of not being happy for others for what they have been blessed with.

Thomas didn’t have what the other disciples had. They had a visit from the resurrected Jesus. Thomas had been out, maybe getting supplies, but he wasn’t hiding like the other fearful disciples, and Jesus appeared to them! Imagine how hurt Thomas must have felt. He wasn’t a coward like the other disciples, and Jesus shows up to see them!

Earlier, while Jesus was still alive “the disciples said to Jesus, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?” So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”” (John 11:8, 16). Thomas wasn’t a coward. The rest of the disciples were hiding in a locked room for fear of the Jews.

And it wasn’t just that the other disciples got to see Jesus. Jesus twice gave them His peace. He commissioned them to go out with the ability and authority to forgive sins, and He gave them the Holy Spirit!

Thomas isn’t happy that the others got to see Jesus, and He didn’t. Thomas wanted to see Jesus too! Now wanting to see Jesus isn’t breaking any commandments. The Ninth Commandment is about coveting things, like in the rest of the disciples getting the commission from Jesus. One person may get a job and another person not get the job, and covet that job. The Tenth Commandment is about coveting living things, like seeing Jesus. You may get to see your favourite movie star, and someone else may covet that experience, and resent that you got that experience, and they didn’t.

Wanting to see Jesus is a great thing, but Thomas wasn’t happy for the other disciples who got to see Jesus, because he didn’t. And then there was all that other stuff that Jesus said to them, and gave to them, that he also didn’t get. Nothing is said about Thomas celebrating the resurrection of Jesus with the other glad disciples. Instead, all we hear is that he wants to see Jesus too, and he won’t believe until he does.

However, Thomas isn’t content to say that he wants everything that the other disciples received from Jesus. Thomas wants more. They got to see Jesus. Thomas wants to touch Jesus to the point of putting his fingers into the wounds of Jesus. You got a new car. I want a new car too, and a new truck. It’s not good enough having the same as you. I want better, because I’m the better person.

How would you feel if you attended church every Sunday, or at least once a month, and someone else you know who has never set foot inside of a church, except maybe for Christmas and Easter, got to see Jesus? I mean He actually appeared to them, talked with them, ate with them, and maybe even healed them or told them that He wants them to be a pastor! Some Christians might be consumed with a sickening feeling of anger or jealousy. Instead of being glad for your non-Christian friend, or maybe semi-Christian friend, you resent them and covet their experience, because you're the faithful Christian, and they're not.

Or how about just comparing yourselves to another church. I'm told that the Seebach's Hill church has attendance ranging from the sixties to the eighties, while our ranges from the thirties to the fifties. Does that make you want what they have, or resent what they have? That again is coveting.

Many a church will look at other successful churches, as far as numbers in the pews are concerned, and think they should copy what that other church is doing, so that their numbers increase too. If you do things a little better with a little more flare, with Sunday School programs and Bible studies, then maybe people will come to our church, instead of theirs. That kind of thinking again is coveting, and sheep stealing.

Yet, how about Thomas, our touchy-feely disciple who wants to see Jesus, touch Jesus, and poke his finger into the holes in Jesus' hands. Isn't that going a bit too far, not to mention being a little gross? Isn't that disrespectful of Jesus, of God? How might God respond to such a crass statement and request? We might want to know the answer, because we can often have the same resentful feelings as Thomas and express ourselves towards God and His church in similar inappropriate ways.

Have you ever heard people say, "I will not come back to church unless . . ."? And you can fill in the blank. Or the person may have never been to a church, and they'll only come to church if God does such and such a thing. We might respond as if we had heard Thomas' request. 'You want God to do what?! Where is your faith? What you're asking for is disrespectful, irreverent, or sacrilegious.' We might expect God to be as offended as we are, and not only reject, but also reprimand such arrogant demands from Him.

However, Jesus shows up, and He doesn't reprimand Thomas, but rather says, "Peace be with you". As He gave His peace to the other disciples, He gave it to Thomas. As He let the other disciples see Him, He let Thomas see Him. Thomas wanted to see Jesus, and there was no sinful coveting in that. That Thomas wasn't glad for his fellow disciples who were glad, but rather chose to rain on their parade was maybe breaking the Ninth and Tenth Commandments. Yet, you don't hear any reprimand from Jesus.

Instead, Jesus says, 'You wanted to stick your finger into the holes in My hands, and stick your hand into the hole in My side where the soldier stabbed Me. Go ahead and do that.' And then Jesus prods Thomas and says, 'Have a little faith. Do you believe Me now?'

What we see here is that Jesus knows what Thomas is struggling with. He knows if Thomas was really coveting and being resentful of the other disciples or not. I can only guess, because the Bible doesn't reveal what's going on in Thomas' heart and mind. But Jesus knows, and He cares, and He shows up. That's not to say that we can all lay down the gauntlet for God and say that we will only continue to believe in Jesus if say, we win the lottery so that we can buy that new car and truck, or He increases our membership to the eighties like Seebach's Hill, or our relative is cured from cancer, and if He doesn't do those things, then we'll no longer believe in Him.

We can't get God to jump for us and ask us how high. But we can see the love that Jesus has for Thomas. Jesus doesn't write Thomas off because Thomas has these doubts, demands, or maybe even feelings of jealousy and resentment, or hurt feelings. Jesus comes to Thomas where he is at, and He provides him with what he needs for his faith at that moment.

Jesus does the same for you, giving you what you need for your faith. God gives you His peace every Sunday with the closing blessing: "the Lord lift up "His countenance upon you and give you peace." God said in the book of Numbers, "So shall they put My name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them" (6:26-27). You want a blessing from God, come to church. Do you want the Holy Spirit like the disciples received? Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Every baptized person has received the Holy Spirit. Do you want a commissioning from God? We call it the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). Do you want to see and touch Jesus' flesh and blood like Thomas did? We call that Holy Communion: "Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28).

There's no need for you to covet what Thomas and the other disciples had with Jesus. It's all here for you. And if others find it in another church, be happy for them there, because that's where God has chosen to bless them with His peace, presence and forgiveness. Amen.