

John 20:19-31

“Hear What We Believe”

April 3, 2016

Some people believe only what their experience tells them is true. Doubting Thomas in our text is an example. He would only believe that Jesus was alive if he could feel the scars in Jesus hands and side. Jesus came into a locked room and allowed Thomas to feel the scars. During this time according to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus ate fish with them. Sadly there are some that will not even believe what they experience. Our experience in this world tells us that there is a Creator. Our Bible tells us the name of our Creator. Yet, we deny that God is our Creator.

Some people hear only what their itching ears want to hear. For example some people find it hard to accept that the pastor can forgive their sins. This is called the Office of the Keys in the Bible. It is the power to forgive and not forgive sins. In our text Jesus said it this way; **“And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”** The Office of the Keys is exercised during the time of Confession and Absolution. The Office of the Keys is exercised during Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, preaching and at other times as well.

The Office of the Keys is actually given to the congregation and exercised by the pastor. Through the pastor God assures the members that their sins are forgiven. The congregation is then responsible to see that the pastor makes right judgments so that a guilty sinner can be assured that in their repentance Christ will forgive. Likewise the congregation is responsible to see that an unrepentant sinner is warned that hell awaits them unless they change their ways. In Ezekiel, pastors are called the watchmen who will be held accountable if we do not warn the people of the danger of the enemy approaching. Of course the Lord calls us to be humble servants so that our ego and pride do not get in the way of His Judgment. I can hear God say on Judgment Day, "I sent Concordia to warn you and you did not listen." Or God could say on Judgment Day, "Concordia failed you, but you still have no excuse because I wrote the Law in your heart and in the Bible. You refused to listen and you hear only what your itching ears wanted to hear."

In May I am going to do a video series by Paul Meier. His video series looks at the history of the first three hundred years of the Christian Church. In our world we hear people tell us many things to prove that the Bible is wrong. Likewise it has gotten so bad in our nation that now Christians are putting out movies trying to prove that God still exists. First we had "God's not dead." Now we have "God's not dead 2." Paul Meier's video series is like touching the scars of Jesus and seeing that He is alive and that He is the one who died on the Cross at Calvary.

Of course we will only believe Paul Meier's message if we have faith. Six hundred years after Christ, Islam tells us that Christians got it wrong and God spoke through Mohammed to correct the record. Then Mohammed told them to take the territory you need and convert, kill or tax those who do not believe. Eighteen hundred years after Christ, God told Joseph Smith that the Christians got it wrong and everyone should become Mormons if we want to become gods and go to the highest heaven. Many listened with itching ears and now follow these false prophets.

Of course the question is; "What is God telling us that we do not want to hear?" Likewise how is God speaking to us and offering us to touch the scars in His hands and side. Like the Disciples we have to humble ourselves if we are going to hear Him. Like the Disciples we have to humble ourselves and go out into our world to tell them of the Christ who offers them eternity. Like the Disciples we have to overcome our fears to be His witnesses. Many will not want to hear us, but for the few we make the sacrifice. I just finished a book by a young man who was a Muslim when 9/11 occurred. He was taught that Islam was the religion of peace. When he explored his roots, he found that Islam was the religion founded upon war. He became a Christian because he sought the God of peace. Who is listening to you? Whose lives are filled with guilt and turmoil and need Christ? Humble

yourself and listen for them! Don't condemn them! Gently reject their sin, the false beliefs, but not them. Amen