



**SAINT JAMES'**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
Fremont, California

## SERMON

19. April, 2009. Easter 2

Title: **"Measure Twice; Cut Once"**

Text: St. John 20:19-31

J.J.

Today, the Gospel is the story of Thomas, whom we have come to know as "Doubting Thomas" . . . an unfortunate label because it's not only inaccurate, but, because of it, we can easily miss the point of the story. This is a story about us! When one looks closer at the text, one sees that Thomas is a lot like us: healthy skeptics; seekers of the truth; inquirers who are looking for certainty, conviction, confidence; searchers after some kind of spirituality . . . people who are trying to discern the will of God for themselves and for the world in which we. And so I invite you to look again at this Gospel story, to step into the shoes of Thomas, and to meet Thomas perhaps for the first time . . . and perhaps to meet yourself as well.



St. Thomas

My name is Thomas. I was one of the twelve disciples. I want to share with you my journey of faith; perhaps from it you will discover something about your own journey. I grew up in a very devote family who followed the Torah (i.e. the laws given to us by Moses (and a whole lot he didn't give us) . . . who followed the Torah to the letter. In our family, we observed all of the high holy days. My favorite was Passover, when my twin brother, younger than I, got to ask that all important question – "why is this night different from all other nights?" – and my father, in great detail, would tell and re-tell the ancient story of the Exodus from Egypt, the crossing of the Reed Sea, the pillar of cloud to shade us by day and the pillar of fire to light our pathway at night; the coming to the Promised Land. And the hope my father had that some day God would deliver us from the hated Romans . . . The hope that God would send another Moses . . . or that Elijah would return . . . or the messiah come. "Hope springs eternal," you know. Well . . . I had no such hope. You see, I'm a carpenter by trade (that's why my apostolic symbol is the carpenter's square), and carpenters, by nature I guess, question everything, we are fact finders, detail people . . . **"Measure Twice; Cut Once."** And so, I became the skeptic that I am . . . a seeker . . . a searcher . . . an inquirer . . . not unlike many of you who grew up in familial piety and naïveté, only to discover that the real world is quite different.

Then I met Jesus. We had a lot in common – we were both carpenters, following in our father's footsteps . . . seekers of the truth, searchers, inquirers . . . but Jesus was different . . . He was a charismatic leader, a teacher, who spoke with authority, who empowered people and changed lives. At first, I was cautious, like usual . . . careful . . . **"Measure Twice; Cut Once."** . . . but the more I heard, the more I liked. He wasn't like the other teachers who touted the same old stuff. No, his message was new, dynamic, even revolutionary. He talked about loving others as you love yourself, of doing good without expecting anything in return . . . simple things like sharing your bread with someone who was hungry, giving a cup of water to someone who was thirsty . . . and you know, it made a difference . . . and I became one of his disciples . . . ah, but always the healthy skeptic, making sure I had the facts straight, taking nothing for granted: **"Measure Twice; Cut Once."** And you know, it worked. He not only changed people, but he radically changed me.

And then, there was last week . . . Thursday . . . a week ago . . . Jesus and the twelve of us had supper together. We often ate together – but that night was different. We were all a little on edge. You see, the religious authorities were out to get Jesus; his words had hit a little too close to home;. And they wanted him silenced. So everyone was on guard. After eating, we walked down the Kidron Valley singing songs as we often did . . . "Shalom chaverim, shalom chaverim, shalom shalom...". We came to our favorite little garden, and Jesus suggested we rest while he went off and prayed, as was his custom. And we . . . we fell sound asleep. Suddenly, and without warning, we were surrounded by soldiers . . . the temple guard . . . swords drawn . . . we wanted to fight . . . ah, but we were no match for them . . . we were followers, not fighters . . . and we all ran for our lives. I ended up in the city, wandering the streets, trying to figure out what had happened, trying to get

as much information as I could . . . wondering where everyone was . . . if everyone had made it out safe . . . alive. Then I noticed a crowd had gathered on one of the street corners. They were shouting something . . . “crucify him”. . . and I looked closer as they continued their screaming at some poor soul that the Romans were about to execute . . . I looked closer and I couldn’t believe my eyes . . . one of those men . . . one of those poor souls . . . was Jesus . . . my God! I followed the crowd at a safe distance . . . I didn’t want to be seen . . . and we came to the hill of skulls . . . and there they crucified Jesus . . . there he died . . . and with him died all of my hopes and dreams for a new tomorrow . . . it was over . . . and I left that place . . . never to return again . . . I wandered the streets for days . . . trying to sort things out . . . trying to figure out where I would go . . . what I would do next . . . searching, searching, searching . . . seeking something that would bring back some meaning for my life. **“Measure Twice; Cut Once.”**

And then, a couple of days ago . . . one of the disciples . . . I think it was Andrew . . . one of the disciples found me on the streets. “Thomas, Oh, Thomas . . . thank God we have found you . . . you’re OK?” Well . . . as OK as one could expect from someone who just had all of his hopes and dreams dashed to pieces. And he said to me: “Thomas, I have good news . . . Jesus is alive!” “Oh, sure,” I said, “tell me another one.” And he said: “Thomas, it’s true . . . Jesus is alive. He came to us, Sunday night, in the upper room. Thomas, I have seen him with my own eyes” And I said: “No way . . . I’m not going to be sucked in again . . . **“Measure Twice; Cut Once.”** “Thomas,” he said, “come and see!” Well, I did . . . I came . . . I saw . . . I touched . . . and guess what . . . At last I was at peace . . . and the rest is history. Tradition says I went off to the far East, to India, to bring the Good News to a people unheard of. They say the Gospel got to India even before it got to Rome. Well, I don’t know about that, but I do know that from that day forward my life changed dramatically in what I saw and heard in the living Christ.

Ah . . . but you’re probably thinking and want to know, healthy skeptic that you are, did Jesus really rise from the dead? Well, let me tell you this: what I have to say to you isn’t probably going to influence you one way or another, or change your thinking, or give you any more certainty. My voice is simply one more two thousand year old witness. But this I tell you . . . fellow seekers . . . fellow searchers . . . fellow inquirers . . . come and see . . . here . . . now . . . in this place . . . in this House of Prayer for all people . . . come . . . listen . . . see . . . touch . . . taste . . . The Word as you hear it read and preached . . . the songs as you sing them to one another . . . the person sitting next to you with whom you will share the peace . . . the Bread of Heaven that you take in your hand . . . the Cup of Salvation you press to your lips . . . add it up . . . **“Measure Twice; Cut Once”** . . . Christ alive! . . . in you . . . . “Shalom chaverim, shalom chaverim, shalom, shalom...”

S.D.G.

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