



WRITTEN WORSHIP

Sunday 12 April 2026

Geoff Cawthorn

DOUBT YOUR WAY TO BELIEF

WELCOME -

From Psalm 111:

Wisdom begins with respect for the LORD;
those who obey his orders have good understanding.
He should be praised forever.

HYMN – He is Lord He Is Lord!

He Is Risen from the Dead, And He Is Lord!
Every Knee Shall Bow, Every Tongue Confess
That Jesus Christ Is Lord!

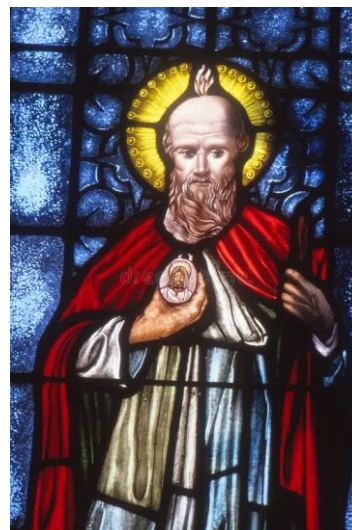
He Is Lord, He Is Lord!
He Is Risen From The Dead, And He Is Lord!
Every Knee Shall Bow, Every Tongue Confess
That Jesus Christ Is Lord!

He Is King, He Is King!
He Will Draw All Nations To Him, He Is King;
And The Time Shall Be When The World Shall Sing
That Jesus Christ Is King!

He Is Love, He Is Love!
He Has Shown Us By His Life That He Is Love;
All His People Sing With One Voice Of Joy
That Jesus Christ Is Love!

He Is Life, He Is Life!
He Has Died To Set Us Free And He Is Life;
And He Calls Us All To Live Evermore,
For Jesus Christ Is Life.

Anonymous



PRAYERS OF APPROACH & CONFESSION

God, of all that is and is yet to be
We thank You for this amazing world in which we live
For the diversity of the whole of creation
For the ways in which we can experience what You have made through our different senses.
We praise you that you encounter Your people.
In every age, in every place, in every setting
We praise You that You make no distinction between one person and the next
And that we are all made in Your image.
We praise Your faithfulness to those who have gone before us,
For Your faithfulness to us today, and we trust in Your faithfulness for tomorrow.
God Your love knows no bounds and your mercy knows no limits
You embrace us and offer forgiveness and healing to all.
God, forgive us for the ways that we discriminate and exclude, consciously or unconsciously.
Forgive us for the limits and conditions we set on Your love, mercy, and forgiveness.
Forgive us for our lack of imagination that reduces You to simply what we can perceive.
Forgive us when we take without thinking and forget to share without counting.
Fill us with Lord, with Your peace and mercy.
Free us from the destruction of our behaviour and restore us to a life lived in You. Amen

PRAYER

Let us pray:

We rejoice and give thanks for your bountiful planet. Great plains, verdant forests, deserts of rock, sand and ice, mountain ranges, rivers and oceans: ecosystems to meet the needs of all your creatures.

We are stunned by the wonder and beauty of Your universe. As we have watched the expedition to travel around the moon, we thank Your that Your glory screams from every realm and we bow down in honour of Your majesty.

We mourn our separation from You, each other, ourselves and all creation.

We have forsaken Your calling to be custodians:

When we drill for oil, gas and minerals, despoiling the earth, poisoning the waters and fouling the air with climate changing gases;

When we fell ancient trees, over-exploit the oceans and techno-farm food, destroying soils, traditional food systems and indigenous communities;

When we desecrate Your world with trash where nothing in nature is intended to go to waste;

When we live lavish lifestyles and turn our other cheek to poverty, injustice, war, famine and unbearable human suffering.

When world leaders and multi-national corporations put profit before the wellbeing of people, communities and a flourishing planet.

We pray that our words, our pilgrimage and our actions may be a witness to world leaders, encouraging and inspiring them to make radical commitments at the forthcoming climate talks. Commitments that will restore the earth and lead to justice for communities confronted by the climate crisis. And may they lead us onto a new path for a sustainable future where we live in harmony with all life.

Open our senses to all we encounter and be with us that we may walk in safety. Awaken us to our true nature, to live in peace with You, each other and all creation. By restoring harmony and balance we too will be restored to wholeness. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Our Father who art....

HYMN - This joyful Eastertide,

What need is there for grieving?

Cast all your cares aside

And be not unbelieving:

*Come, share our Easter joy
That death could not imprison,
Nor any power destroy
Our Christ, who is arisen!*

No work for him is vain,

No faith in him mistaken,

For Easter makes it plain

His Kingdom is not shaken:

Chorus

Then put your trust in Christ,

In waking and in sleeping,

His grace on earth sufficed;

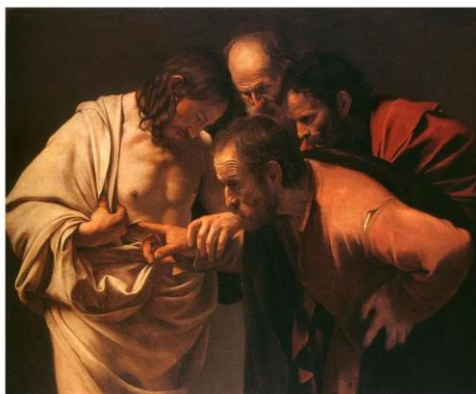
He'll never quit his keeping:

Chorus

Fred Pratt Green

REFLECTION

The Incredulity of Saint Thomas by Caravaggio from the Christian Art website:



The Incredulity of Saint Thomas

by Caravaggio (1571-1610)

Painted in 1601

© Sanssouci Picture gallery, Potsdam, Germany

In this painting, Thomas's face shows surprise as Jesus lovingly holds his hand and guides it into the wound. We see Thomas leaning forward, capturing the expression when he moves from 'doubting' to 'believing'. The hands of the other two apostles are concealed, although their curiosity is visible and scarcely less restrained than Thomas's. Christ is being depicted as understanding, rather than reproachful or impatient.

It is a very simple rendering, with no halos present, stressing the humanity of Jesus, which is further enhanced by showing Christ's semi-naked torso (the other three figures are fully clothed) showing He comes to them as a man made of flesh and blood rather than as a ghost, so His resurrection is all the more miraculous. The work is executed in *chiaroscuro*, which is the use of stark contrasts between light and dark areas, for dramatic effect. This subject matter has been represented in Christian art since at least the 5th century, and thus was important to the early Christian communities.

POEM - THOMAS THE TWIN by Andrew King

*In John 11:16 – Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples,
“Let us also go, that we may die with him.”*

But you fled, as the others did, when he was arrested.
From a distance you watched him suffer, die on the cross.
That night you lay down on a bed of hot coals,
and the fire of your words burned your eyes.

All day the memories came like old boats beached in darkness.
You couldn't seem to recall the shapes of simple flowers
yet could not forget the faces turned toward
him on the Galilean hills.
The wet clouds in your eyes hid the sun.

You were not with the others when the women told their news.
You found it hard to breathe behind the shut doors of the house;
your legs needed movement, your eyes wanted sky, as if trying
to prove your soul was not entombed.

Grief circled you like a city, you circled in your despair,
you circled back to the house, a moth in shadow, seeking light.

Faces smiled, filling your eyes like bright candles,
holding out to you astonishing news, a hot flame.

You wondered: is this what the moth sees
before it dies?

How you longed for the news to be true,
longed as the stilled ship longs for new wind in its sails,
as eyes in a deep cave long for light.
Longed to be able to touch him again.
For him to be able to touch you.

Now he is here, and let your heart lift from hurting.

Now he is here, let your lungs fill with breath.

Now he is here: your mind kneels in wonder.

Touch him in the midst of your fellow disciples,
see him, your crucified and living Lord,
listen as he speaks to you the blessing of peace.

Let your eyes be filled, Thomas, with horizons of light.

You died with him.

Now rise with him too. Amen

Jesus Appears to His Followers

When it was evening on the first day of the week, Jesus' followers were together. The doors were locked, because they were afraid of the elders. Then Jesus came and stood right in the middle of them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. His followers were thrilled when they saw the Lord.

Then Jesus said again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, I now send you." After he said this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you don't forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

Thomas (called Didymus), who was one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other followers kept telling Thomas, "We saw the Lord."

But Thomas said, "I will not believe it until I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side."

A week later the followers were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came in and stood right in the middle of them. He said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand here in my side. Stop being an unbeliever and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you see me. Those who believe without seeing me will be truly blessed."

Why John Wrote This Book

Jesus did many other miracles in the presence of his followers that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then, by believing, you may have life through his name.

REFLECTION - DOUBT YOUR WAY TO BELIEF

I want you to know that there are cutting-edge applications that illustrate how imaging can answer biological and other questions and that novel imaging technologies open new windows for biological discovery, including single-molecule and super-resolution, light sheet, and correlative light electron microscopy..... Perhaps I should have put it another way.....'seeing is believing'.....and that was our friend Thomas's motivation when the news broke that Christ was alive and amongst His disciples. Thomas, didn't disbelieve them, he knew his friends so well, but found the story was so immense that they might just as well have said that an elephant had landed from outer space.

So, what is going on here? We don't have first-hand knowledge but we know, because we are told, about our Lord's death and we glory at His resurrection but what we are really looking for is our own resurrection and the hope of release from all the pain and distress of life.

Well, we start the story in a dark place on Good Friday and encounter the complete darkness that fell across the earth at the time of Christ's death. This was total darkness and it seemed as though light itself was turning its back on the world. All the dark side of life was concentrated in one terrible moment: all the grief, confusion, pain, unanswered prayers, lost jobs, financial upheaval, disease and disasters.....it is the darkness that visits all of us as we journey on....it seems devastatingly, final. And yet.....

And yet, as we wait with Thomas the Gospel starts to emerge: gently, quietly, slowly but effectively a new light is born, a new dawn. The women approach the tomb on Easter morning, still in the darkness, thinking only of their grief but they are the first to find the breaking of a fragile light.....the first daybreak of God's new creation. All the anguish and darkness of life is not taken away or erased but transformed, seen in a new light. The reality of resurrection is all too amazing for them to be bothered with fear and their mourning becomes worship. Death and despair will never have the last word, if they ever did, as Easter proclaims that darkest night can become the birthplace of eternal light.

The problem was that for Thomas, just like for some of us, the light hadn't fully dawned. But, light changes everything. A building, say, a church looks so different in changing light and what looks austere and overpowering on a dull day, can become bright, welcoming and cheery on a sunny day. So for Thomas the dullness of Christ's death still lingered, He couldn't embrace the sun filled scene that the other disciples had discovered.

No doubt the other disciples weren't quite sure how to deal with an incredulous Thomas but he doesn't seem to have bothered Jesus in the slightest. Our Lord wants the Thomas's within us to know the truth and He knows just how incredible the story of His resurrection can seem. It is a story contrary to how we think as humans and, even when we experience the light, it still requires great steps of faith to fully take it in. Ultimately it is faith that carries us through and enables us to truly dwell in the light. Through faith we connect with the Holy Spirit but having doubts may be understandable, desirable even, as Christ's response is the foundation of our futures. By all means have doubts, they are natural but what really upsets our Lord is inactivity because He wants us to produce results for His Kingdom. He compared our failure to stir ourselves, to a barren fig tree – just listen to this from Matthew. Is He really threatening us?

Matthew 21:18-22 New Century Version

The Power of Faith

Early the next morning, as Jesus was going back to the city, he became hungry. Seeing a fig tree beside the road, Jesus went to it, but there were no figs on the tree, only leaves. So Jesus said to the tree, "You will never again have fruit." The tree immediately dried up.

When his followers saw this, they were amazed. They asked, "How did the fig tree dry up so quickly?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will be able to do what I did to this tree and even more. You will be able to say to this mountain, 'Go, fall into the sea.' And if you have faith, it will happen. If you believe, you will get anything you ask for in prayer."

So, how about Thomas? His doubt may have been fully understood by Jesus but was his faith sufficient to prevent him becoming a barren fig tree which is of no use to our Lord.

To attempt to answer this question we have to enter a world of unproven traditions and we have to travel to India. The locals still refer to Thomas in their midst. There are village folk songs, dances and stories which suggest that in about 52AD Thomas pursued a mission to Kerala area of South India where he is still known as, 'The Apostle of India.' After establishing many churches he crossed over to the west side of India, to Mylapore, where he provoked hostility from existing religions. They were jealous of his success, and eventually it got so bad that they killed him in AD 72. South Indian Christians still venerate Mylapore as Thomas's resting place and stories about him abound.

It would seem that this bad boy amongst the disciples; the one who held out for the truth, the cynic who would not accept the testimony of his friends, the latecomer who missed the good news the first time around, went on to display the most amazing faith that impressed and converted many and out of his stubbornness came the disciple who is known as the patron Saint of Indian Christianity.

Thomas hadn't received an immediate response from Jesus, just like we have to wait sometimes for God's response to us. He had to wait a full week after Jesus had first visited the other disciples. What was that time like for Thomas? Did he think the other disciples were deluded (that is certainly a common reaction today among non-believers as they look at us), did he think he wasn't good enough to receive Jesus (again something even believers can still suffer from), perhaps he thought he had missed the boat, missed the glory and that he would only ever know Jesus in a second hand way through the experience of others (even today only coming face-to-face with Christ is good enough to carry us to discipleship).

But, in the end, what is most impressive about this story is that Jesus came to Thomas. In doing so He made it clear that it's okay to waiver, to take our time and it's okay to hope to feel the presence of Christ with us, in us and around us. In the end we are empowered to become bold enough to share the love of Christ with the world and be fruitful for His Kingdom.

There is a hill in India called, 'The Mount of Thomas,' and it is often covered with fog and cloud but when the cloud lifts there is a scene of incredible colour and beauty across the valley. It is dotted in this place with numerous brightly painted statues. They are statues of the disciples and you can spot Peter, Andrew, Thaddeus, James.....but Thomas is not among them. He can be found on a mound of his own and nearby is a statue of Christ kneeling in prayer, head bowed. No great church has been built to honour Thomas, there is nothing protecting the scene from the elements but there is a quiet and a serenity to this act of gentle holiness that says the story of Thomas is indeed the story of the miracle of The Resurrection made certain by a doubter, like us.

Thomas wanted it for himself and he now passes the good news to us all. Each one of us must insist on seeing and knowing God for ourselves and then taking Him to our hearts. This is how the story of The Resurrection becomes our own truth and it is how it spills out into the world and brings others to faith.

So, hold out for the truth, doubt with honesty, be a latecomer if needs be, but if we accept the presence of Jesus, if we feel Him living with us, He will transform form us, He will bring His light and overcome the desperation, pain, distress and even the fear that we feel.

After two thousand years....thank you Thomas! Amen

HYMN - To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
so loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear His voice!*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
and give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to ev'ry believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. *[Refrain]*

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. *[Refrain]*

Fanny Crosby

PSALM 16

I know You always watch over me, O God, and so I take refuge in Your goodness.

**EI Shaddai it is You alone who are God,
and the source of everything good.**

I delight in the faithful of the land, whose lives radiate Your goodness.

The unfaithful who choose what is false multiply their sorrows.

I want no part in their , life, nor will I choose what they value.

For You alone, O God, are the choice of my heart.

You are the One who determines my destiny.

**In Your mercy You have placed me in pleasant circumstances,
and provided me with a precious heritage.**

**I bless EI Shaddai, who gives me wise counsel,
and instructs my heart through the night.**

Thus I am always mindful of her presence.

With Her beside me I shall not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is filled with gladness, and my soul with glory!

**My body also rests safe and secure,
knowing that God will not leave me in deathless
or allow Her beloved to experience corruption.**

She constantly shows me the path of life.

In Her presence is unbounded joy;

at Her right hand are pleasures without end! Amen

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

By prayer we seek the powerful presence of God in our lives. So, we pray now with words and silence knowing that God knows us better than we know ourselves.

Let us pray,

Lord God we pray for all who work for peace and unity, and for all world leaders that they will look for solutions that put aside pride and nationalism and seek to end the suffering caused by war and violence, injustice and inequality, disease, prejudice, poverty and hopelessness and bring healing to the world. We pray especially for those weary of the fighting in Ukraine and for peace in the Holy Land and especially Iran, where injustice seems to pile on deep rooted hatred – the words, 'Lest We Forget' seem long forgotten. We so want all to feel Your presence although the world seems lost as we look desperately for Your peace to reign in these areas and all areas where there is conflict.

We pray for refugees and migrants travelling into danger and exploitation. Lord Jesus – as a child You were a refugee and were kept safe in another country – help us to hold that example, as we look for ways to solve these issues.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Father God we pray for our Church, so that each of us will use our individual talents to enable Your message to flourish as we witness to Your compassion. Help us all to spread the warmth of Your love to everyone we meet whether they accept Your grace or not and we ask that they should find us caring and loving.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Gracious God we pray for those suffering for the creeping problems of old age and for sick people, who need help and support, as they find life painful, lonely or uncertain. Bring healing to those suffering mental pain or stress and help them to sense Your comfort in times of need. We pray for all those who are struggling with their lives. Bring them hope of an end to their sufferings, and for the future. May we find the best way to come alongside those in need, without being overbearing but showing genuine concern.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful Lord, Your love reaches beyond the grave. As our lifespan dwindles be with us and with those we love. May those who have gone before us rest in Your eternal peace. We remember those who have died and we pray for all whose life is saddened by the death of a loved one - be with them in their loneliness.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Everlasting God we pray for ourselves. As we begin a new week, we ask that in all we do, we may never stop sensing Your presence within and alongside us and never stop witnessing to Your Fatherly love and care which knows no bounds.

Merciful father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

HYMN - How deep the Father's love for us,

How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss –
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life –
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart –
His wounds have paid my ransom.

Stuart Townend

BLESSING

By Jan Richardson:

So why do you linger?

You have seen,
and so you are
already blessed.

You have been seen,
and so you are
the blessing.

There is no other word you need.

There is simply to go and tell.

There is simply to begin.

Let us go in the name of God our creator, Jesus our saviour and the Holy Spirit, who challenges us to show His love in the world.

So, now we go in peace and may the God of peace go with us and remain with us this week and for evermore.

Amen

This image depicts the St. Thomas Mount National Shrine in Chennai, India, featuring a prominent statue of Jesus and St. Thomas in front of the Church of Our Lady of Expectation. The church is a significant pilgrimage site, believed to be where St. Thomas the Apostle was martyred.

