

# **Sermon on Zoom on Sunday 3 July 2022**

## **by Rev. Bill Church**

*(Readings: Job 42. 1-6 & John 20. 24-29)*

### **Thomas the Apostle**

We normally hear about Thomas the Apostle on a Sunday after Easter when we read from John 20 as one of the Gospel readings. Because 3 July, the Feast of St Thomas, is a Sunday this year, we hear it again away from the context of the Resurrection, and we can look at Thomas from another angle. And it is well matched with a passage from the Book of Job. Both Job and Thomas faced an intellectual challenge.

The main part of the Book of Job is sandwiched between two frankly fairytale-like accounts, first of Job losing everything that is dear to him and then finally recovering even more than he had in the first place. In between, he and his so-called Comforters wrestle with questions about suffering and fault, and whether God really cares anyway.

Most of the advice from the Comforters is both unwelcome and wrong, for instance that if Job is suffering it must be because of his sin or some neglect of the Law of Moses. Job himself tries his best, but in the end the message from God is: 'I made you and the world and all the wonderful things in it, who are you to question me? Who can presume to understand me?' Job is overwhelmed and gives up the struggle to define God or fathom his ways. It is enough to see God's majesty and perceive the insignificance of mankind.

Thomas, also, is faced with a challenge. Can he believe that Jesus has risen from the dead as the others have told him?



Can he trust what we would call hearsay evidence? Like all the other disciples, he must have heard Jesus say - more than once - that he would suffer and die and rise again. But, like the other disciples, he seems not to have got the message. At least he did not scoff at the news about the resurrection, like the

other disciples who had dismissed as idle chatter the report of the women who had gone to the tomb. At least he did not fail to recognise the risen Jesus, as had Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

But he did ask for direct proof; and in this age of false and fabricated stories, ought we not to commend him rather than condemn him as "Doubting Thomas"? And when he did meet Jesus, who bore on his body the marks of the Passion, Thomas fully accepted the evidence, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God". Nobody else anywhere in the Gospels calls Jesus "My God".

Faced with the evidence, Thomas found a deeper recognition than anyone else of who and what Jesus was. Job's submission to God was humble but hardly inspirational. Thomas' acceptance led him to a bold and active ministry. Surely Thomas should be our role model.