Good Morning! I am the apostle, John. Many of you know me as one of the writers of the New Testament—the Gospel of John or the book of Revelation or the three little letters that I wrote.

1. But this morning I'm not here to talk about myself. I'm here to talk about one of the other disciples. You know him as Thomas, who was a twin. Now, most of the time you only hear about Thomas this week after Easter, and then you call him by a certain name. You call him Doubting Thomas. Well, this morning I want to let you know that's ***not*** how you should remember him. So much more went on with Thomas than just that one week where he had trouble believing Jesus had risen from the dead, that he would not believe unless he saw and touched Jesus for himself. So this morning, I'm going to go back and tell you a few things that I know about Thomas, things I wrote about in my Gospel.

As one of the twelve, Thomas was there with us, from the very beginning. So, he saw Jesus touch a leper and watched the sores disappear. He saw Jesus cast out a demon and silence that demonic spirit with a commanding word. He saw a paralytic lowered down through a roof and Jesus forgive the man. Then, so we'd know He could do that, Jesus healed him. We all saw it. We were amazed when the man jumped up and ran around. Thomas was there when Jesus fed five thousand men, plus women and children. He helped to hand out the bread and the fish. He gathered up some of the leftovers into a basket. Yes, Thomas was there with us throughout Jesus' ministry.

But Thomas has his moments where he stands out, where he says something that gives a glimpse of who he is. Like the time when Jesus' good friend Lazarus became sick, we weren't in Judea where Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, lived. The religious leaders back there wanted to kill Jesus, so we were off beyond the Jordan where it was safer. When we got word that Lazarus was sick, that Jesus was to come and help, Jesus didn't go right away. He waited for a couple days, and then He told us we were going back to Judea because Lazarus had died.

Well, it was dangerous to go back. Those in power were looking to kill Jesus. We wondered, why go back now if Lazarus is already dead? But when Jesus makes up His mind, you don't change it. And Thomas—not Peter, not James, not me—Thomas speaks up. He says, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." At that moment, Thomas showed his loyalty, his devotion—that he was willing to die for Jesus. The words he spoke showed that he'd walk into danger, with courage, to stay with Jesus.

You know, in a way, Thomas showed us what a disciple looks like. You see, a disciple is someone who is loyal, devoted to Jesus. A disciple will die to himself, to herself, to be with Jesus. Thomas did just that. He followed Jesus, even when it meant going somewhere you usually don't want to go.

So we went with Jesus. When we arrived, we saw Jesus bring Lazarus out of the tomb, out of a grave where he had been dead for four days. Each of us saw something amazing. We saw that Jesus was God Himself, the very Son of God. Only God could bring the dead back to life again like that.

Part of the reason we went with Jesus to Judea was because of Thomas. I always admired Thomas for his loyalty and devotion.

Then there was that night in the Upper Room when we were having our Last Supper with Jesus. It was a Thursday. Jesus knew what was going to happen. He gave us words of comfort for what would be a horrific few days for us. He told us that His Father in heaven had a place with many rooms and that He was going to prepare a place for us. He warned us that He would be gone for a little while, but when He came back, He would take us there. Then He told us something we just didn't understand. He said that we knew the way to where He was going. We're all kind of looking at one another. Know the way? Where was He going? What was going on? Guess who was the one who was honest enough to admit he didn't have a clue about this way. Thomas.

Thomas asked him, "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" That was Thomas. Honest. Humble. Willing to let everyone know he was confused and needed help understanding where Jesus was headed and why.

Jesus' response to Thomas wasn't one of accusation, scolding him for not understanding something. Instead, Jesus, says one of the most amazing, concise, revealing sentences I ever heard Him speak. Jesus simply declared exactly what He had come to do. Listen to His words: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." If you were to take all that I wrote-my Gospel, the book of Revelation, my three letters-and summarize it into a couple sentences, those words would do it. The only way we would be welcomed into those many rooms in the Father's house would be through Jesus. He spoke the simple truth that when we look to Jesus in faith, eternal life is ours.

We heard those words because honest, humble Thomas asked Jesus that question about where He was going and the way there. With Thomas, what you saw is what you got. I always admired his honesty and his humility, but never more than on that day.

Of course, what happened next filled in the details of where Jesus was going. Later that same Thursday night, when we all ran away, Jesus would be arrested. His way would lead to suffering and being beaten, bruised, and bloodied. Finally, He would be raised up on a cross. On that Friday, Jesus became the way for us disciples, for all of you, to the Father's house. On that cross, He took all our doubts, all our fears, all the things we may have done wrong, anything that would have kept us from eternal life.

That Thursday night, that Friday and Saturday, we were in hiding. But Jesus showed He was preparing a place for us in His Father's house.
Then on Easter day, we found out that Jesus truly was the life. We had heard from the women who'd gone to the tomb that He had risen from the dead, or, at least, that the tomb was empty. Peter and I ran there and investigated. But we hadn't seen Jesus yet. Later that evening, we were up in a room, huddled together, still afraid. Jesus appeared and showed us He was alive. He spoke a word of peace to us, quieting our fears. We saw His hands and side. We knew at that moment where true life was found. Jesus was the way to true life for all eternity. No one else could take us to the Father and the home that was waiting for us.

But you know who was missing. Thomas wasn't there. Well, throughout that next week, we kept telling him that we saw Jesus, that He was alive. But Thomas kept insisting that unless he could see it for himself and touch Jesus' wounds, he would not believe. Can you blame him? He saw Jesus crucified, disfigured beyond recognition, dead, and buried.
I don't know if I would've believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes.

But you know what Thomas ***didn't*** do? He didn't walk away. He stuck with us. The following Sunday evening, he was right there in the room. We all watched as Jesus appeared. He walked right up to Thomas and invited him to touch His hands, to put his hand into His side. Thomas saw and made one of the boldest, clearest confessions of belief ever. We all heard him say, "My Lord and my God!"

If you want to remember Thomas, remember ***that***. Don't focus on those times of doubt. He is not ***Doubting*** Thomas. He is ***Believing*** Thomas. He truly believed in Jesus as his Lord and his God. He believed that Jesus was the way, the truth, and the life. He believed that Jesus would bring him to the Father and the room prepared for him. I always admired Thomas for that bold confession of belief.

After Thomas made that good confession, Jesus looked at him and said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." I want you to

imagine that Jesus is giving you a quick glance because you have believed even though you haven't seen and touched Him like we did. At that moment, Jesus is including you with Thomas, with all of us in that Upper Room, giving you life, showing you the true way to the rooms the Father has prepared for you.

I have one more word in my Gospel about Thomas. It happened a little later. We were waiting for Jesus to ascend into heaven and for the Holy Spirit to come and form the church. Well, one day, Peter decides to go fishing. I went along with him, with my brother James, Nathanael, a couple other disciples, and Thomas. Thomas is with us again. Good old Thomas, faithful Thomas. We don't catch anything until Jesus appears on the shore. He tells us to cast our nets on the right side of the boat. We catch 153 fish. We know it's Jesus, and Peter dashes to the shore, leaving the rest of us to pull in the fish. Soon, Thomas is with us, around the campfire, listening to Jesus, having breakfast with him. Thomas listens as Jesus sends out Peter to tend His people, His sheep. Then we realize that Jesus was sending us out too. Thomas, along with the rest of us, was to tend Jesus' sheep, to find others who could know Him as the way, the truth, and the life.

What happened to us disciples? I was exiled to an island and lived to an older age. We didn't have all sorts of instant communication like you do, but I heard that the other disciples were each martyred for telling others about Jesus. I heard that Thomas might have made it all the way to India where he was killed. The story I heard was that a spear was thrust through him. That would be fitting, since he was the one who was invited to touch Jesus' side where the spear had pierced our Lord.

Put all these times together, and you realize you shouldn't call him Doubting Thomas. No, admire him like I do. He was loyal, devoted, courageous, honest, humble-one who makes a bold confession and backs up what he says, perhaps all the way to India. I would call him Believing Thomas. For that is what Jesus called him to do.

2. So what can you learn from Thomas during this Easter season? There's much to choose from, but if I had to focus on just one thing to learn from Thomas it would be this: Thomas stuck with us; he worked alongside us. He gave a strong confession for us to see and hear. He was good old, faithful Thomas, and that made a huge difference for the rest of us. In other words, you can do just what you're doing right now-gathering together to be with other believers. To be there for someone else.

When you gather together in worship, you don't always know when someone is in pain or hurting or struggling to believe (Jn 20:25). A sudden

death of a child. A lost job. A broken relationship. Depression that has hit hard during the week. Tears from being bullied or falling victim to a scam. Maybe just plain fear.

That person may have trouble singing the hymns or praying the prayers or confessing the Creed or speaking the words of praise. That person needs to know you are right there, standing alongside them. In a way, you become the one singing the hymn for that person. You confess with the words of the Creed for that person to hear. You're responding to the prayers with "Lord, have mercy." You're offering up the praise that is so hard for someone else to say that morning.

Don't think being together in worship is just about you and Jesus. It is also about you being there for one another, consoling one another, encouraging one another—being good and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ for one another, just like Thomas was for us.

Well, time for me to go. This morning, remember Thomas not as doubting, but as loyal, brave, devoted, living as a disciple for Jesus, humble, honest, and someone who backs up his words by what he does. Remember Thomas this day as the one who did just what Jesus called him to do. He is Believing Thomas! Amen.