

When Lord Halifax, was foreign secretary of Great Britain,
 he shared a railway compartment with two quite prim spinsters.
 A few moments before reaching his destination
 the train passed through a tunnel.

In the utter darkness

Halifax kissed the back of his hand noisily several times.

When the train drew into the station, he rose, lifted his hat,
 and in a gentlemanly manner said:

May I thank whichever one of you two ladies

I am indebted to for the charming incident in the tunnel.

He beat a hasty retreat,

the two ladies *glaring* at each other.

Doubt...

It can be powerful stopping the strongest of us dead in our tracks...

It can be divisive, like it was for the two spinsters on the train...

It can be safe, so that don't burn our hand on a hot stove.

And of the three...

Safety is the most dangerous

But that's what we want

It's why we have insurance

It's why we lock our doors

Why we protect our private information

So we can be... *safe...*

But can our fixation on safety... *deny* us opportunities?

Can our desire for security actually *create* insecurity?

In the first few days after our Lord's resurrection
 The disciples were frozen with fear
 They huddled in their room, doors locked, terrified

It was now crystal clear... following Jesus would be deadly

Can you see Thomas... wringing his hands... solidified in doubt...

*Look... I know that Jesus died on that cross, I get that.
 But this business about him rising from the grave...
 Come on. No one has EVER done that...
 One day he's dead and buried
 Then three days later he's up and walking around.*

*Not until I see it, will I believe it
 Not until I put my fingers in the nail holes
 Will I accept it
 It's just too, too, unbelievable*

All of us can identify with Thomas' need for proof.
 We all want proof... beyond reasonable doubt.
 When we hear stories of close encounters with God,
 We want them too! God! Show me! Help me believe!

Renowned 19th century artist Gustave Dore lost his passport.
 As he approached the border crossing, he pled his case.
***We get a lot of imposters here. Prove who you are.
 Draw those peasants over there.***

He grabbed a pencil and paper, and in just a few moments,
 Doubt removed... The gate lifted... and he strode across the border.

A German concert violinist was waiting to set sail to London.
 To kill some time he wandered into music store
 The owner asked to see the violin he carried
 When he opened the case, the shopkeeper darted away from the counter
 And returned with two policemen, shouting,
This man has Fritz Kreisler's violin!

The customer said, "*I am Fritz Kreisler!*"
 But they didn't believe him either
 Until he actually played for them...
 Doubt removed... profound apologies... a police escort to the wharf.

That's what we want...
 We want proof.
 Proof that will conquer *all* doubt.
 Not just *reasonable* doubt... *All* doubt.

All over the world...
 preachers will talk about *doubting* Thomas...
 Hoping that his evidence will be enough
 To change hearts and minds...
 To accept Christ as their savior and Lord...
 But even after hearing this incredible tale
 Some will continue to deny the truth... and God's love... for *them*.

Listen to Thomas!

*I know that I've been with you guys for a few years
 And I've personally witnessed healings and casting out of demons
 lots of other miracles,
 But right now... I need to see it for myself*

When I hear these words, I hear Thomas deeply saddened
He was not among the few who witnessed Jesus
He was not in the right place at the right time
And so he was left out.

He was one of the apostles! He'd sacrificed everything to follow Jesus.
And when the greatest miracle of all took place, *he missed it!*

He *wanted* to be part of it... no... *needed* to part of it
to see the miracle with his own eyes
And so he *discounted* the words of his closest most trusted friends.

How often has someone told you...
the dishwasher... the car... the computer... is broken
And you won't just take their word for it
You've got to try it out yourself.
You just used it a few minutes ago. It was fine.
This can't be. They must be doing something wrong.
Flipped the wrong switch... hit the wrong button...
Probably operator error.

Then you discover... they were right. It *is* broken.
But what's more broken than the defective appliance
Is the hurt they experience... realizing... you don't trust them.

The other disciples must have felt that way
one of their own didn't believe them
To be expected from an outsider,
But *not* from another apostle...
who was there for all the rest of it... Not from Thomas.

On a hot August afternoon
 A man stopped at a roadside watermelon stand.
 He tapped several, listening for the sound of perfect ripeness
 Held it up to the grizzled old farmhand

How much?

\$1.10

He dug into his pocket, no change... and just one bill

All I have is a dollar.

That's ok, I'll trust you for it.

Well, that's mighty nice of you

So he turned to walk away... with the watermelon under his arm.

Hey, where are you going?

Outside to eat my watermelon.

But you forgot to give me the dollar!

You said you would trust me for it.

Yeah, but I meant I would trust you for the dime!

Wait! You don't trust me at all.

You're only willing to take a ten-cent gamble on my integrity!

Saying we trust... and actually ***trusting***... are not the same thing...

When we claim that we ***trust*** God... do we ***really*** mean it?

Or are we just hedging our bets?

Do we ***have*** to have proof?

Beyond reasonable doubt...

Reasonable doubt.

We're all familiar with it.

Courtroom dramas... TV and Movies...

IMDB.com the internet movie data base

Lists 180 different TV shows and movies titled

Reasonable Doubt

Criminal law has five stages of proof.

Reasonable Suspicion...

The amount of evidence that an officer needs to "frisk" someone

Probable Cause...

The amount of evidence that an officer needs to arrest someone

Preponderance...

The amount of evidence needed to win an auto commission case

Clear and Convincing...

The amount of evidence necessary

for the state to take a child away from a parent

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt...

Evidence beyond and doubt based on reason

It's easy to make the right call with 20-20 hindsight

And yet... in the moment... Thomas waffled... couldn't commit...

But God loved him so much... extended so much Grace...

That when the truth was revealed... When Jesus said...

Put your finger here and see my hands.

Reach out your hand and put it in my side.

Do not doubt but believe.

Thomas spoke *before* he touched him...
Just the *offer*... was more than enough...
And Thomas cried out...
My Lord and my God!

Some are here today because... they *believe*...

Others have *reasonable suspicion... probable cause*...

Some recognize the *preponderance* of evidence... *clear and convincing*

While others... many who are *not* here...
Can't... or won't... believe...

No one on the planet has come face to face with Jesus... not yet.
But one day... we all will...

Don't wait until then... to believe *beyond a reasonable doubt*
That Jesus Christ is Lord of All
That his power and mercy are absolute
And that God's love goes beyond all human understanding

But God will not make the choice for you...
You must choose... *only* you...

Jesus said
Have you believed because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.
Amen.