These Are Written, so that…

In the name of Jesus our Risen and Living Savior, Amen

Very appropriately, the Church has appointed for the Sunday after Easter the Gospel of John 20 which includes "Doubting Thomas." It's very fitting because we know that Thomas wasn't there on Easter Sunday evening when Jesus first appeared to his disciples. Even though the others tried to persuade him throughout the week, he famously (or infamously) wouldn't believe unless he could see for himself. And then, one week later, here we are on the Sunday after Easter, Jesus appears to the disciples and Thomas IS with them.

Even though we read this account today, we're not going to focus on the first portion of the text – one of our Seminary Students has prepared a sermon on this text – but because the Seminary Choir is still on tour, he couldn't be here this weekend; so on July 4th weekend, we'll consider that portion of this reading. He shared with me that he didn't address the last two verses. And for all the times over my years preaching on the Doubting Thomas text, the last two verses didn't get much consideration. So that will be our focus this morning. Listen again to the last 2 verses of our text: ***30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

I. So that you can know what God wants you to know

John's words in verse 30 can certainly cause a curious mind to wander. Jesus did many other signs… many which John did not write down in his Gospel. What were those signs? What miracles did he do? What kind of wonders were they? Were other people he raised from the dead, in some dramatic fashion? Did he cause weather to change dramatically? Were there diseases that he wiped from the face of the earth? One's mind could go in a 100 different directions, but if you think about, what additional spiritual benefit would there be? After all, aren't the four Gospels already full of Jesus's miracles?

If you tally up just the specifically identified miracles… such as turning water into wine, walking on water, calming a storm, there are about 37 miracles. However, if you consider more broadly, the number goes way up. We read in Matthew 4:24, *"People brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them."* It's impossible to quantify all those miracles with an exact number. And again, even if we could, what additional spiritual benefit would there be for us?

Jesus' miracles serve a beautiful and powerful purpose: They prove he is True God! As true God, as the one who created all things, he has power over all creation. As true God, his miracles prove that he has power over life and death. Jesus' miracles demonstrate that he is a God of compassion. When there was loss, sickness, sorrow, he drove out demons, he restored sight, he gave the grieving mother her son back from the dead. God made sure that Jesus' miracles were recorded so we can learn these all truths about our Savior.

Yet Jesus came to do far more than amazing miracles. His goal was very singular and focused – the salvation of souls. God's rescue plan to save sinners from eternal death in hell – is what Jesus was all about. Consider the miracle Jesus did only few days before Palm Sunday when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus had gotten word that Lazarus was sick; and yet he waited in Galilee a few more days, so that when he arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for 4 days. Many had come out from Jerusalem to comfort and console Mary and Martha. Word had spread. Everyone knew Lazarus was dead, very dead… for 4 days already. To roll the stone away now would have been absurd; the very bad orders of decomposition would be overwhelming.

It was the perfect situation and time for a miracle – a miracle to accomplish exactly what God wanted. 1) God's name would be glorified. 2) Many people would see and hear that Jesus has power over death. 3) Mary and Martha would receive back their brother. 4) Lazarus would live again. Consider "the many…" Many who saw and heard this miracle… Many who shouted "Hosanna" a few days later on Palm Sunday… Many who cried, "Crucify" on Friday… would also be part of the Many would hear after Easter – that the very same Jesus who was crucified on the cross, rose from the dead… helping them connect the dots. The miracle of raising Lazarus served so many of God's good purposes – all which pointed to Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior.

Miracles themselves don't save – it's knowing Christ Jesus who saves. Lazarus, though he was a recipient of an incredible, later on died. But one day Lazarus will rise again; not because he could count how many miracles Jesus did – but because he counted on Jesus to be exactly who Jesus was – the Messiah, his Savior. Lazarus knew exactly what God wanted him to know. And he learned that by listening to Jesus firsthand.

Have you ever felt jealous because you didn't get to learn firsthand… and that Lazarus or Thomas or the disciples were more blessed because they got to walk and talk with Jesus for years? Jesus dispels that myth. *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* Jesus tells us that we are blessed, because we have believed God's plan of salvation.

The details and the specifics of that plan are clearly laid out – cover to cover – throughout the Bible. The Scriptures are clear when it comes to our personal sin. We inherited sin from our parents, and they from theirs, tracing all the way back to Adam and Eve. This original sin that we're born with is just as dangerous and damnable as the sins we commit each day. And sin has consequence – God told Adam and Eve, "eat of it and you will die." In Romans we read, "The wages of sin is death." In Ezekiel, "the soul who sins is the one who will die."

It's critical to know this truth about our sin – so that we know how dire our situation is. Scriptures make it clear that we cannot give to God a ransom payment for our sin, no payment is ever enough. When we come to this understanding, when we realize the depths of our sin, the weight of shame and guilt, and recognize that there's nothing we can do to rectify our lot – it leaves us pleading, "Lord, have mercy."

Jesus did many other miracles not recorded by John in his Gospel… BUT… here's the good news!... THESE words… The Scriptures… are written down for you – SO THAT you may believe that Jesus is your Messiah. He is the very offspring of a woman, promised to Adam and Eve. He is the One whom God anointed from eternity who has come to save you. Through these words, we know what God wants us to know… and through these words, God gives us exactly what he wants you to have – life in his name.

II. So that you can have what God wants you to have

On that second Sunday after Easter, Thomas was given exactly what he was looking for. *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

Jesus appeared to Thomas and proclaimed Peace – Peace be with you… and peace was in Thomas' heart. Jesus commanded Thomas to set all doubt aside – and he did. You hear it in Thomas' faith-filled reply, "My Lord and My God." It's one of the most beautiful confessions of faith you'll find in the whole Bible! God gave Thomas exactly what he wanted him to have – Peace! And God has given you the same – that's what verse 31 proves, ***31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing <u>you may have life in his name.</u>***

When you know that you have been given life – eternal life in heaven with your Savior and all believers of all time – there is a peace in your heart that cannot find equal in this world. This Peace isn't found on a golf course lined by full blooming azaleas. This Peace isn't found in an investment portfolio that shows great 1st quarter returns. This Peace isn't found in a clean bill of health from the doctor. This Peace only comes from knowing your Savior has taken away your sin. This Peace only comes from knowing that nothing can separate you from his love for you. This Peace does amazing things in our lives: it liberates and empowers you and I serve God and our neighbor freely, joyfully, cheerfully, generously. And when struggles, challenges, doubts arise – and they will – you and I know exactly where to go to restore that peace, ***These are written… so that you may believe… that Jesus is your Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have – exactly what your God wants you to have - life in his name.***

Brothers and sisters, may we continue to treasure the Written Word – reading it, sharing it, clinging to it for in these word – we have life. Amen.