

## Children's Moment

April 27, 2014

**Title:** Checking the Roll

**Theme:** Doubting Thomas

**Object:** A class roll book similar to ones used at school

**Scripture:** "Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'" John 20:24-25a

What is the first thing a teacher does at the beginning of the school day? I don't know about your teacher, but the very first thing many teachers do each day is to **SLIDE** check the roll. The teacher opens the roll book and begins to call out the names... Benjamin, Jonathan, Isaac, JoJo, Gabriel, Olivia, Gideon. As the student's names are called, they raise their hand and answer, "Here!" If the teacher calls Caleb's name and he is not there, the teacher marks in the roll book that he was absent. Why is it important for the teacher to know that Caleb is absent? It is important because he needs to be told what he missed when was absent.

That's similar to something that happened in our Bible lesson today. It was the Sunday after Jesus was crucified and his disciples had gathered together in a locked room. They were together in that locked room because they were afraid. They were afraid of what Jesus' enemies might do to them. The Bible tells us that, even though the doors were locked, Jesus came in and stood there with his disciples. When the disciples saw Jesus, they were very happy.

When Jesus appeared one of the disciples, whose name was Thomas, was not there. All the other the disciples were in that room with Jesus. I don't know why Thomas wasn't there. Perhaps he was sick, or maybe he just decided to stay at

home that day. The next time the other disciples saw Thomas, they told him what he had missed when he was absent. They said, "We have seen Jesus. He is alive!" Thomas didn't believe them. **SLIDE** He said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

The next week the disciples were in the house again, and this time Thomas was with them. The very same thing happened again. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among his disciples. He turned to Thomas and said, "See my hands; put your fingers here. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

**SLIDE** Thomas didn't need to touch the wounds where the nails had been or put his hand into his side. He fell on his knees before Jesus and said, "My Lord and my God!"

One of the great promises Jesus made was when he said, "Where two or three gather in my name, I am there with them." Each week we come together in the name of Jesus to worship and to praise him. So, what do we miss out on if we are absent? We miss out on the same thing that Thomas missed out on when he was absent -- the chance to be with Jesus!

Father, we have come into this house and gathered in your name today because we want to be with you and have come to worship and praise your name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Slide** Christ the Divider of People

I am not sure I fully understand all the answers as to why the Lord Jesus produces the divisions and conflicts among people that He does. However, as I studied this passage of scripture I came to understand it was necessary and right. Jesus said this would be the case, **Slide**<sup>34</sup> “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. **Slide**<sup>35</sup> For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;<sup>36</sup> and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.” (Matthew 10:34-36) I believe history has shown and my own experience has also seen that where the truth is held in high esteem there naturally are divisions. This is especially true for those who hold to the doctrines of the Bible as true and the foundation for all life. Pastor Charles Spurgeon once wrote, **Slide** “I have heard of a whole parish in which there were no religious bickerings because there was no religion; there were no religious strifes because nobody had anything worth striving for. And that is not a state of things over which I can rejoice.” No one can rejoice when there is no stand for truth, when there is not a church body seeking the truth of Scripture and striving to live out the scriptures. But at the same time we sorrow over the fact that division between people over Jesus as the Christ necessarily means that some will not believe in Jesus and therefore, will not have salvation.

**Slide** First Division – The Convinced

This brings us squarely to our study this morning. Beginning in verse 40 we read, **Slide**<sup>40</sup> “Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words ...” What

words had they heard? The words of Jesus preached a few verses earlier – **Slide** “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” (John 7:37-38) Now continuing in verse 40, **Slide** “... when they heard these words, were saying, ‘This certainly is the Prophet.’ ” These people were convinced by Jesus’ teaching that He was the Prophet of whom Moses wrote of, **Slide**<sup>15</sup> “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. <sup>16</sup> This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb (Mount Horeb [הַר הַרְבֵּי] *hō rēb*) - Alternate name for Mount Sinai) on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’ **Slide**<sup>17</sup> The LORD said to me, ‘They have spoken well. <sup>18</sup> I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.’ ” (Deuteronomy 18:15-18) This is the same language that the people in Galilee spoke in John 6:14 after Jesus fed the thousands, they said of Jesus, **Slide** “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” These people understood the teachings of Moses, even though they were not Pharisees. We observe that these people may not have understood Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, but they did know God had sent Him, just as Moses said God would. Then there were some in the crowd that did have a clear understanding of who Jesus was and they said of Him in verse 41a, **Slide** “Others were saying, ‘This is the Christ’” They had been intimidated earlier into silence by fear of the Jewish leaders as is stated in verse 13. But, now having become convinced that Jesus was the Messiah; they boldly proclaim Him as the Christ. As James Montgomery Boice said, **Slide** “A believer lives for Christ ... serves Christ ... striving to be like Christ. Does Jesus divide? Yes. But for those who know Him He

is also that which draws us together.” Jesus both unites and divides. Believers and unbelievers are divided. To claim belief and faith in Jesus means more than lip service. Let me quote A. W. Pink, who died the year before I was born. Pink said, **Slide** “But while a knowledge of the letter of Scripture is to be prized, it ought not to be over-estimated. It is not sufficient that we are versed in the historical facts of the Bible, nor that we have a clear grasp, intellectually, of the doctrines of Christianity. Unless our hearts are affected and our lives molded by God’s Word, we are no better off than a starving man with a cook book in his hand.” My beloved we must live every moment worshipping, praising and living for Christ – this is the mark of a true testimony and of true faith.

### **Slide** Second Division – The Contrary

Continuing, we see the second division – look in your bibles beginning in verse 41, “Still others were saying, ‘Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?’<sup>42</sup> Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was? These people thought that Jesus had failed to satisfy one of the prophecies of the Old Testament, so they dismissed Him. The crowd was by and in large from Jerusalem or it’s outlying areas, Galilee was far to the north or “in the sticks” as we would say. So when they asked if **Slide** “the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?” What they were really saying is that Jesus could not be the Messiah because He was from “the sticks” and was not sophisticated enough to be the Messiah or their leader. Do we not see this today with those who consider themselves to be intellectuals and as intellectuals - Christianity is beneath them? In truth their ignorant pride dismisses the Bible and Christ without examination or intellectual pursuit. Sydney Harris, an American journalist said, **Slide** “I am tired of hearing about men with the ‘courage

of their convictions.’ Nero and Caligula and Attila and Hitler had the courage of their convictions--but not one had the courage to examine his convictions, or to change them, which is the true test of character.” If we believe - we will have the courage, given by God through His Holy Spirit, we will examine our convictions, change our lives to be like Christ and be molded by the scriptures, and be able to explain the scriptures and who Jesus is to others.

So at the time of Jesus the Jewish leaders **Slide** failed to examine the scriptures and Jesus to see what was true and today it is the same. If the people had actually examined the scriptures they would have found that Jesus did in fact meet the qualifications. **Slide** Jesus was a descendant of King David as is found in the genealogy in both Matthew and Luke chapters 1. **Slide** He was born in Bethlehem as found in both Matthew and Luke chapters 2. These alleged intellectual leaders assumed that since Jesus had grown up in Nazareth, that He had been born there. In truth they gave lip service to knowing what the credentials of Jesus were but they were only interested in maintaining their positions of power. Today we see exactly the same thing – people want to maintain their positions and do not want to be held accountable to God. Again this passage illustrates the truth that Jesus divides people. **Slide** Jesus divides believers and unbelievers (1 John 5:10), **Slide** those that walk in the light from those who walk in darkness (John 8:12), **Slide** the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32-33) and **Slide** the children of God from the children of the devil (1 John 3:10); Jesus purposefully divides believers from the world. Believers are to be holy or set apart from the world and yet be Jesus’ light to the lost world. All of these things resulted in **Slide**<sup>43</sup> “So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.” This division continues to this day.

Because of the division in the crowd **Slide**<sup>44</sup> “Some of them wanted to seize Him,

but no one laid hands on Him.” For the third time since Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem an unsuccessful attempt was made “to seize Him.” As is the case with the earlier attempts “no one laid hands on Him” because the time was not right in God’s plan.

### **Slide** Third Division – The Confused

Unlike those in the crowd who either believed in or rejected Jesus as the Christ, the officers of the temple police were confused by Him. Once again read along with me beginning in verse 45, “The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, ‘Why did you not bring Him?’<sup>46</sup> The officers answered, ‘Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.’<sup>47</sup> The Pharisees then answered them, ‘You have not also been led astray, have you?’<sup>48</sup> No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?<sup>49</sup> But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed.” These temple police had been sent several days earlier to arrest Jesus and returned empty handed. This time they again returned empty handed and the Chief Priests and Pharisees demanded, **Slide** “Why did you not bring Him?” Interestingly they did not blame the crowd – they didn’t say the crowd would not let us take Him. Instead, they expressed their bewilderment and amazement, declaring, **Slide** “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.” As temple police they were both Levites and trained in the scriptures of the Old Testament and yet, they were stunned by the teachings of Jesus. They did not know what to do – they were caught between the power of their leaders and the grace of Jesus’ message and the hatred of their leaders and Jesus’ message of love of God the Father and hope for the future. How long had these temple guards listened to Jesus? We are not sure, but between verses 32 and 37 we can understand that at least a day had gone by, maybe longer.<sup>47</sup> “The Pharisees then

answered them, **Slide** ‘You have not also been led astray, have you?’” Here they now stand before the Chief Priests and Pharisees and they are now accused of being duped by this Jesus who has come to shaken their power structure – they are told that as Levites they should know better and that they are not as intellectual, well studied and wise as their leaders. For the Pharisees to say with assurance, **Slide**<sup>48</sup> “No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?” The Pharisees are saying to the temple policemen, you are stupid and naïve, but we are above falling for these teachings of the Jesus who comes from the unimportant province of Galilee. They are saying that if Jesus were truly the Messiah, they would have been the first to know and understand this. The Pharisees continue by putting down the common people saying, **Slide**<sup>49</sup> “But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed.” In this context the Pharisees are referring to both the Old Testament writings and the rabbinic traditions that had come to overshadow the scriptures. In the 400 years of silence after the writings of Malachi the Pharisees had come to believe that their writings made them spiritually elite and put them on the same level as the prophets inspired by God to write of the coming of Jesus. The Pharisees are saying the common people are deceived and gullible because they do not know the Law. Because of the peoples ignorance they are a curse to the leadership of Judea. In ridiculing the crowd the Pharisees are appealing to the temple officers pride and desire to be above the common people as Levites and temple officers. These temple officers and guards had a crucial decision to make. They could either reject Jesus as the Messiah and receive the praise of the Pharisees, the religious establishment that controlled the temple and power, or believe in Jesus and be spurned by their bosses, lose their jobs and positions of authority. Unfortunately the Apostle John does not tell what choice these men made. What choice are you making? Does the pressure of job security



and friends outweigh the need to stand firm and proclaim Jesus as the Christ? Is your being a Christian a great secret in your life? Or as Pastor Boice said, **Slide** “A believer lives for Christ ... serves Christ ... striving to be like Christ” does this describe your life?

### **Slide** Those Considering

The Pharisees’ claim to the temple police that as religious leaders they were unanimously united and rejected Jesus as the Christ, in fact, was not true. Let me know read verses 50 to 52, <sup>50</sup> “Nicodemus (he who came to Him before [Nicodemus had come to Jesus in the night], being one of them) said to them, <sup>51</sup> ‘Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?’ <sup>52</sup> They answered him, ‘You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.’” Nicodemus may have been the only decenter, but then again there may have more and one reason Nicodemus is mentioned by name might be because he was the most notable and had already sought Jesus out. Although there is no evidence that he is a follower of Jesus at this point we know by chapter 19 of the Gospel According John that he has become a believer. **Slide** <sup>38</sup> “After these things (the crucifixion of Christ) Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret *one* for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. **Slide** <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, who had first come to Him (Jesus) by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.” (John19:38-39) However, it does appear that at this time of Jesus speaking at the Feast of Booths - Nicodemus is at least open to considering Jesus’ claims. Even though Nicodemus does not openly defend Jesus he opens a procedural point that they should find out what Jesus is teaching before they

condemn Him. Even the Romans, who were hated by the Jews, did not condemn a man without a trial. The chief priests would later take Jesus to Pontius Pilate who was the fifth prefect of the Roman province of Judea, from AD 26–36. As prefect, he served under Emperor Tiberius. Pilate told the Jewish leaders at that time, **Slide** “I have found in Him no guilt *demanding death.*” (Luke 23:22) Even Pilate, an unbelieving Roman, recognized that the Jewish leaders were acting out of jealousy and to protect themselves. This demonstrates that the members of the Sanhedrin had made up their minds without regard to the teachings of God in the Old Testament scriptures. So they turned on Nicodemus, who dared raise a question of law and fairness. They attacked him personally, to associate Nicodemus with the generally despised, unsophisticated people from Galilee as demeaning and as an insult meant to shut him up. To show the strength of their insult they mockingly tell him to **Slide** “Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.” Was it convenience or ignorance that the Pharisees overlooked the fact that Jonah came from a city near Nazareth? **Slide** “He (God) spoke through His servant Jonah ... who was of Gath-hepher” a village in Galilee in the region of Zebulun. (2 Kings 14:25) Some of the Bible scholars I read believe that the prophets Nahum and Hosea were also from Galilee. In our study this morning we find that the Pharisees imply that Nicodemus is ignorant of the most basic biblical truths, but their statement, actually exposes their own lack of knowledge. At least one prophet was from Galilee and Jesus was born in Bethlehem not Nazareth. Is this not the way of many people today? They do not challenge the Bible or believers with facts, but with scripture taken out of context or they quote scripture that cannot be found in the Bible and if that does not work - they make up facts and resort to personal attacks. The Pharisees were spiritually dead and resorted to attacking their opponents.

Just as when a man told Jesus he wanted to follow Him, but first wanted to bury his father Jesus responded, **Slide** “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:60) The man’s father died as an unbeliever and his fate is final. What can a dead person do? Nothing! Like those who are living all around us today, they too are like the Pharisees, they are spiritually dead, what can they discern of spiritual truth? Absolutely nothing – they are spiritually dead. Until Christ through the Holy Spirit awakens their souls they belong to the world of the lost. If one claims Jesus as their Lord and Savior then Jesus also makes clear what He expects, **Slide** “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62) Are you trying to keep one foot in the world and the other in the kingdom of God? It will not work! If you say you believe, then believe fully, give yourself to Jesus! Remember what Jesus said that caused those in the crowd to believe, **Slide** “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” (John 7:37-38) The gospel of our Lord Jesus should flow as rivers of living water from His followers to the dry and parched world. All of the precepts and teaching of the scriptures to what we as Christians are to be are summed up by what Jesus said in the Gospel According to Mark, **Slide** “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31) Do you love the Lord enough to be holy and divided from the world and to be a river of living water - living, living the gospel! Rise up out of your seat, rise up now and worship God in our last song and then worship Him with every breath you breathe until you join Him in glory forever!