**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 4-24-2022
The Power of Testimony**

Friends, three weeks ago, here at Chestnut Grove, we were very blessed to have my dear friend, and our brother in Christ, Zachary Vincent, come and share his heart with you. Zach shared some of his story, some of his testimony – and he tied it in with God’s Word from John chapter 9 in the story of Jesus healing the man that was born blind.

Zach shared that while his story certainly does involve the cerebral palsy that he has, he does not let that define his life. Rather, his life is defined by knowing and loving Jesus Christ. Everything else fits into that, including his disability. And going by all the heart-felt comments from many of us, **there was power in his testimony.**

Do you know that there is power in testimony?

His message was so powerful because it flowed from his heart and he truly owned it. Zach is the real deal when it comes to living out the faith. His messages come from deep within him. He wasn’t just spouting words; he was connecting them with his life and our lives.

Here’s an example of the power of testimony that again relates to Zachary.

It was actually Zach, a few years ago, who first recommended the powerful Christian production called *The* *Chosen* to me. But despite his testimony about this great show, I didn’t actually check it out for several months. I didn’t really heed his testimony like I should have, at least as quickly as I should have.

But when I finally did see it, I have been so very blessed by it.

His testifying to *The Chosen’s* impact on his own life lead me to be see it can to be impacted by it. In fact, everyone who sees or will see *The Chosen* can have Zach to thank for him testifying to me about it.

**Again, there is so much power in testimony**. So much power in hearing and heeding testimony and in giving testimony.

Years ago, I had the privilege of serving on a jury. And as a juror, testimony is huge. Everything flows from the credibility or lack of credibility of testimony. Decisions or verdicts are made based on power of testimony.

The Scriptures would be considered expert testimony.

This topic of testimony reminds me a bit of Jesus’ disciple, Thomas. Thomas is unfortunately most commonly known as what --- as doubting Thomas. Why? Because he didn’t heed the very credible testimony of a large group of people about Jesus’ resurrection.

In the Scriptures we learn that of the 12 apostles, Judas Iscariot has taken his own life soon after betraying Jesus.

Of the 11 remaining apostles, the other 10 were all gathered on the evening of Jesus’ resurrection. But, for some reason, Thomas was not present. We are not told why. Was he so distraught by the events of Jesus’ passion that he felt that he needed to be alone? Was it that he may have feared that if he was with the group of apostles, that he might be arrested himself? Or was he just out getting some food somewhere, we do not know. And we certainly do not need to know.

But for whatever reason it was, Thomas was not present.

But the other 10 have this amazing encounter with the risen Lord. We read about it last Sunday at worship. It is just beautiful and amazing, with Jesus giving multiple proofs that He was physically alive and well.

But how would Thomas respond to the amazing good news that the 10 would be sharing with him when they next saw him? Unfortunately, not very well.

(Let us turn to the text itself and read about this now). It is John 20:24-31

**24Now Thomas (also known as Didymus[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20%3A24-31&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26892a)**]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”**

**But he said to them, “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.”**

**26A 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!” 27Then 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.”**

**28Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”**

**29Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

**30Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31But these are written that you may believe[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20%3A24-31&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26899b)**] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

Friends, John the apostle is very specific as to why he wrote this gospel. And we just read it. Let us hear it again. It is verses 30-31.

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If you are in school or think back to when you were in school, you may have learned of something called a thesis statement. The thesis statement is the main point or argument that is being made by this writing.

John’s thesis is that by testifying to some of the many signs that Jesus has given in the presence of His disciples, that those that hear or read his gospel would believe in Jesus as the Messiah, as the Son of God, and that by believing they may live true life in Jesus’ Name.

That is the main purpose of the Gospel of John. John’s Gospel is all about the power of testimony. Jesus’ words and Jesus’ actions testify to who He is. John and others were firsthand witnesses and they testified to who Jesus is and what He has done.

Thomas had seen Jesus do miracle after miracle and he himself testified to others about others miracles. And yet, here we find Thomas not heeding the testimonies of the ten who had seen Jesus risen. And so, unfortunately, Thomas has gotten labeled for this as doubting Thomas.

But Jesus, in His mercy, comes again a week or so after Easter to the gathered disciples and this time Thomas is with them. When Thomas sees Jesus he does not do a detailed inspection of the body of Christ, instead, Jesus addresses Him and challenges him to look and see and touch the wound mark.

For Thomas, seeing was believing and he says “**My Lord and my God**!”

Now, catch this. Jesus tells him that he believes because he sees, but blessed are those that believe without seeing. This is very important.

In other words, blessed are those that heed the testimony of those that saw.

So friends, as we process this passage featuring Thomas and Jesus and John’s purpose statement for his entire gospel, what is the big takeaway for us today?

And I think that it is simply this. **It is to grasp the power of testimony when it comes from Jesus Christ.**

None of us have physically walked with Jesus, as the Jesus’ first followers did. But we have their reliable testimony in four inspired books – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

These books are reliable and trustworthy, as it is all God’s Word. There were living witnesses that could have called out these writers and said, “You’re just making stuff up!” But the truth is, their testimony was correct and they had either seen Jesus risen with their own eyes or interviewed those that did.

Each of us is in some ways like a juror. The testimonies are overwhelming to the truth of Jesus as being the Messiah and the Son of God, and the One who can give us true and abundant and eternal life. But it is up to us to heed the testimony and to believe.

Biblical faith, is not the type of faith that is wishful thinking or just willing ourselves to believe something.

Biblical faith, rather, is based on the heeding of mountains of evidence and testimony on the truth of what God has done (in the Old and the New Testaments alike) with their own eyes and who testify. And then choosing to submit Jesus in light of this.

That is the kind of faith that we are called to. We are to stake our lives on the rock-solid testimonies of Scripture.

And friends, we are called not only to heed the testimony of Scripture, but to heed the testimonies of those that have been transformed by the God of Scripture – such as Zach.

And finally, whose words and actions have been a testimony to you? And who are we meant to testify to?

Our lives lived are meant to testify to the grace and love and mercy of God. The actions that we take are a testimony. The words that we saw are a testimony. Whether we realize it or not, we have all been subpoenaed. Our words and our actions testify to a life that is trusting in Jesus or not. We are called to make a difference in Jesus’ Name in this world.

I would like to share with you a poem that an inmate at York County Prison whom I’ve gotten to know over the years since my time volunteering there recently wrote.

Although he is a babe in Christ, he is seeking to testify as well to Jesus and His grace.

The poem he sent me this week is called *Level of Greatness*

The power in u
Pushes me to feel elevated,
So every move I make is for u
There’s never been a time I hesitated.
Without this bond we share
I’d be broken in despair,
Nothing on earth can compare
For me the way that u care
Jesus no matter where
U manage 2 give my spirit,
A touch light as air
Makes me stronger when I’m near it.
They say love is blind
But it was never meant 2 be seen
Your words they hug my mind
Then I feel a sense of relief.
U push me 2 become better
Never complacent or settle for basic
No wonder you’re my Lord and Savior
As u define my Level of Greatness…

(This is by a man named Damien)

Maybe you feel like you are in a prison yourself these days. Or maybe you feel like things are going great. Or maybe somewhere in between. Wherever you are at, Christ desires to walk with you there. And He desires that you testify, in word and in deed, to His Work in your life. Truly, there is so much power in your testimony.

We may be the only Bible that some people ever read. May we be a walking testimony of Jesus Christ. May we help others look up to Jesus as Thomas did, and say “My Lord and my God!”

Let’s pray…