**The Ven Andy Broom, Archdeacon of the East Riding, reflects on John 20.19-31 for the Second Sunday of Easter, 27th April.**

I wonder where you are right now listening to this talk. I suspect most people will be sat down somewhere; maybe sat down at home or maybe sat on a pew in church with others, watching it on a bigger screen. And have you ever stopped to think that when you sat down, you actually expressed faith in that chair or that pew? What do I mean by that? Well, you could have looked at the chair and thought, ‘I think you'll take my weight. I think I can sit on that for a while and be reasonably comfortable.’ That's belief in the chair or the pew. But faith is when you put that belief into practice and you decide to sit on it and you find it does take your weight, and you are reasonably comfortable.

That's become faith, as you trust trusted in the chair. And there's a sense in that's what we do with God. We can't prove the existence of God beyond all reasonable doubt. But each one of us will sift the evidence, we'll consider our own experience, we’ll look around the world, at others, and consider their experience, and we'll come to a conclusion that God does exist.

We believe in God, but that's only the first part of our journey with him. Faith is when we put that belief into practice. Many years ago, somebody reminded me that faith is spelt F-A-I-T-H, and the best way to think of faith is ‘forsaking all, I trust him.’ I like that. Forsaking all I trust him. That's what faith in God is about. We're called to put our belief into practice. We're called not just to be believers in Jesus, but disciples of Jesus, to follow the risen Christ who is risen from the tomb, to live for him, to live by his values and to trust him, to deepen our relationship with him.

And where there’s faith, there has to be room for doubt, because we can't prove God beyond all reasonable doubt. And actually, most Christians, if we're honest, have moments of doubt. We have questions that we struggle with. We have issues where every now and again we think, is there really a God? How do I make sense of that? We don't talk about doubt very often, but it's part of the Christian experience.

And that, of course, is where we find our gospel reading today. Dear old Thomas, often known as ‘Doubting Thomas’. Do you recall he wasn't there the first time that the risen Jesus appeared to the disciples in the first half of the gospel reading? And he was having none of it. “Unless I see the marks of the nails in his hands and put my fingers where those nails were, and put my hand in his side, I won't believe,” says Thomas. And sure enough, a few days later, the risen Jesus appears again, and this time Thomas is overwhelmed and convinced that he really does exist. “My Lord and my God!” he declares. And in that incident, Jesus recognises the privilege that Thomas had to actually see him, to be able to put his hands in Jesus's hands as he wanted to.

In fact, he said, “Have you believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” In those words, Jesus recognises that faith is what we each have, and there is a challenge to that; unlike Thomas, who could literally touch the risen Christ, we can't have that. But we sift the evidence, we come to a point of belief and then on to a place of faith. Jesus recognises that is part of our journey and therefore, I'm sure recognises also that doubt goes with it. For those questions that we have, he understands as being natural and part of our journey with him. But still, he calls us to follow him.

Thomas was right, “My Lord and my God,” that's who Jesus is. He is our Lord, he is the one that we can follow, we can trust entirely, and he is divine, he is indeed the son of God. And our Lord and our God calls us to have faith in him, to live that out every day, wherever we are, whatever situations we find ourselves with, whoever we are alongside, to enter each day deciding we will forsake all, we will trust him. I don't know what that will mean for you today or in the week ahead. But I trust in this Easter season we will each one of us go deeper in our life with God as we realise a little bit more of who the risen Jesus is, and we respond in faith, trusting him, giving our all to him.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you that you are our Lord and our God. Help us to put our faith in you and to follow you more closely this day and in the week ahead. Amen.