

What words can I offer, in the face of such a terrible and tragic circumstance? What words of wisdom can I share in such a time of grief and sorrow? I lack the wisdom to make sense of it all. In times like these, words are painfully inadequate. When we face life's tragedies, the mysterious twists and turns of life which leave us bruised and baffled, what can be said? Perhaps words help us to a degree, after all words are a primary means of communication. Sometimes talking about things helps us deal with it. I am using words now to communicate. But rather than putting our energy in frantically searching for words of wisdom, words which make sense of it all, we should try to quiet our heart, still our busyness and take inventory of our lives. For it is in the stillness and the quietness that God can be found.

We all have questions. We all want answers to the questions that burn in our hearts. We want answers to the medical questions; Answers to the philosophical questions; answers to the spiritual questions. We want answers, WORDS that will satisfy the questions that burn inside us. We must recognize however, that no words will ever be sufficient to explain the tragedy that took place. No wise words can ever satisfy our hearts. No words can replace, the place that Thomas held in all of our hearts.

We have questions —questions for which we want answers. But what we must understand is that the answer we seek is not a concept or a collection of wise words. The answer, *the only answer* that will satisfy our hearts, is a person: The person of Jesus Christ!

When God revealed himself on Sinai to Elijah the prophet, He was not found in the violent wind, or the earthquake, or the fire. God was revealed in the still small voice. "Be still and know that I am God" the Psalmist wrote. It is in the quiet, in the stillness that God can be found. At times God is found in the midst of words. But God is not necessarily found in the abundance of words. In fact Proverbs instructs us that when words are abundant, sin is not absent and folly is in not far off. Wisdom can be found in the stillness and quiet. Wisdom too, is not a concept. Wisdom is a person. Jesus Christ IS the wisdom of God

Many of you are familiar with the story from the Old Testament of Job. Job lost everything: Seven sons and three daughters all killed instantly; All His possessions stolen by raiding armies; Lastly he lost his health, being afflicted with boils from head to toe. There is something very important in the story that we must hear. The last verse of the first chapter tells us "through all of this, Job did not sin or blame God."

Eventually Job's friends show up. Surely it is because of friends like these that the saying was made, "*with friends like this who needs enemies.*" They are not true friends. They do not offer comfort, consolation, encouragement or even sympathy. They open their mouth and begin long-winded speeches, abundant words, all the time implying that it is somehow Job's fault that these tragedies have taken place. But his so-called friends were wrong. Job had not sinned or blamed God.

Job had many questions deep in his heart. His friends talked and talked and talked, but never answered these questions. At the very end of the story, God finally has enough of Job's so-called friend's speeches. God revealed himself to Job and communicated directly with him. In the end, God did not answer any of Job's questions either. God answers the questions of Job's heart with His own questions. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Have you ever commanded the morning, and the dawn to take its place? Is it by your understanding that the hawk extends its wings and soars?"

Job responded to this, "these things are too lofty for me!" He couldn't answer God. Job remembered his place in the world. From this revelation of God, Job learned that the answers to his personal tragedy were too lofty for him as well. The answers to tragedy are too lofty for all of us. Tragedy defies our ability to understand. Words can never make sense of our suffering.

Job never found the answers to the questions, but He found the answer his heart needed. God revealed Himself to Job. God met him in the depths of his sorrow and despair. This was what he desperately needed. No words would ever be sufficient. Being touched by God, God revealing himself and reaching into Job's heartache, this was the answer that no words could provide.

Our hearts need something as well. We think we want answers to our questions. We think we want words of wisdom that will comfort us. But what we really need, is God to reveal Himself in the midst of our sorrow and pain. What we truly need is God to touch the pain in our hearts. We need God to come beside us and help us bear the terrible burden we bear in losing Thomas. What we truly need - is to know that God is with us. That God feels our sorrow and pain. That He understands the difficult days that we are facing. That He cares about us enough to meet here in our suffering.

Death was not God's plan. Death entered the world as a consequence of Adam and Eve's sin. Sin, suffering and death were not God's intention. But God has revealed Himself even in these experiences, bearing our sin, suffering on our behalf, dying for the salvation of mankind. God the Son, became a man, the man Christ Jesus, because of His great love for us. He did this to totally identify with us -to walk in our shoes. God became man that He might understand experientially, what life is like for us. He was a real human being who suffered, who ultimately gave Himself as a sacrifice to save the Human Race. We recognize His physical suffering. But we also must recognize that Jesus suffered emotionally and psychologically. It hurt as His people rejected Him. It hurt deeply when Peter denied Him, and Judas betrayed Him.

God the Father, gave His only begotten Son. He understands what it is to watch His own son suffer and die. He understands the horrible pain. Jesus Christ, has no divine mother, for He is from eternity without a mother. But His humanity had a mother, the Virgin Mary. She too looked on to the Cross as her only Son suffered and died. She knows what it is to watch her child suffer and die. She understands what Vicki must feel.

God does know what our suffering feels like. God does know how great our pain is. The Virgin Mary, knows what sorrow encompasses us. God can be found now, as He always can be. He is near to us, even now. God is not far off. God can be found, in the midst of our sorrow and pain. He can touch the deep place in our heart and comfort us in our sorrow. He hasn't forsaken us and God has not forsaken Thomas. We simply must call out to Him, and God will meet us and help us bear our burdens.

In the stillness and quiet, not only can we find God, but we must find ourselves. We must take inventory on who we are -who we have been -on who we could become! My impression of Thomas, is that he was a young man with no regrets. Well, perhaps a couple. He may have regretted that Summer camp wasn't a month long! Perhaps he regretted that he couldn't LIVE at the beach the rest of the Summer!

This is not the kind of regret I'm talking about. I am not suggesting that Thomas was perfect. He had his own sins and failures to face, like each of us do. But he didn't have regrets. He acknowledged his sin and he sought to move on and experience life to the fullest. He endeavored to love people, as his uncle Brad said so well last night. It is a quality I will always admire about him. At my age, I have my own share of regrets. Sadly enough, some 13 year olds in today's world already have a lion's share of regret. Not Thomas! He made good choices. God preserved him on a good and wholesome path.

Life is a precious gift. Life is a Sacred gift. Thomas understood this, and lived his life according to this. Thomas's life was a gift to each one of us. In fact all life is a gift. Every one of our lives is a precious and sacred gift. What will we do with that gift? Will we waste that precious gift on things that don't matter? Do we want to look back on our life and be full of regret?

Times like this, should remind us to quiet our hearts so that we can see ourselves. We live in the Silicon Valley, one of the busiest places in the world. It is easy to get lost in the busy lifestyle. We can loose touch with who we are. We can loose touch with our priorities, and what really matters. It is good to slow down so that we can take inventory of the kind of person we are -the BETTER person that we could become by the grace of God. With God's help we could become noble and honorable people. With some looking inward, we could see some areas that need to change and priorities that need to be turned around. We need to love God, and love other people the way Thomas did.

This morning, as all of us experience the sorrow and pain of losing Thomas, I want to encourage you to call out to God. He can be found in the midst of what we are experiencing. He is not far off. He can help us carry this burden. He can help comfort our pain and sorrow. We simply must call out to Him!

I also want to challenge you. Don't live a life of regret. It's not too late. At whatever stage in life we find ourselves, we can change. We can live a life free from regret. We can strive to become people of honor, and individuals who love others. It makes life worth living, and it is worthy of Thomas's memory.

May Thomas's memory be eternal!