

Give Thomas at least this much credit: he is genre savvy. Genre savvy is when a person recognizes that their own situation is like a genre of fiction, and acts accordingly. Like if you find yourself at a spooky old house with some friends, even if you don't believe in ghosts, you know better than to split up and explore. Or when a bad guy catches a good guy, and he's sure he can't escape, but he still decides not to explain his evil scheme to the good guy.

Remember that one of the reasons Jesus had come to Jerusalem at that particular time was because Lazarus had died. They had already earned the jealous scorn of the powerful. Thomas was savvy enough to recognize that if Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem in response to the death of Lazarus, the powers that were would probably take the opportunity to kill them — and, indeed, they had killed Jesus.

Thomas was also savvy enough to recognize that his squabbling fellow disciples were not the most reliable men in the world — and, indeed, all of them except for John had abandoned Jesus at his crucial moment; Peter had said he didn't even know Jesus. So we can understand, and even sympathize, with Thomas when he doubts, because he is not doubting Jesus *per se*, but rather doubting a fantastical claim made by men whose track record was dubious at best.

Thomas recognized that Jesus's story had shaped his life. That's the whole point of being a disciple. Thomas's real mistake was not doubting, but misidentifying the genre of the story of Jesus. Thomas thought he was in a tragedy, and up to this moment his experience was completely consistent with the conventions of that genre: a good man had taken a noble cause so far that it brought about his downfall. In a tragic story, you say that the hero was a good person with a noble cause, but went too far, or succumbed to his flaws, or made a tragic error, or was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

And we can sympathize with Thomas's mistake of genre because the story that he was a part of had never been told before. The story of the Resurrection is unique in all history, which is one reason why it can be difficult to accept. Most of the time, once we realize that a story is telling us something that is at odds with everything else we know, we dismiss that story, and most of the time that's the right decision. But in the case of the Resurrection, the thing that makes the story unique is the very reason to embrace it.

The Resurrection is unique because it is God's solution to the problems of sin, corruption, and death. As familiar as these problems are, they are not what God intended for Creation to become, and God loves the world too much to just give up and accept problems like that. God knew perfectly well that nothing God had created could mend Creation, so God sent God to do what only God can do.

The Resurrection is also unique because God's solution worked. God didn't need to try again; Jesus accomplished all of his goals. And, the Resurrection is unique because it changes the nature of existence and reality itself. It changes the rules of the

game, transforms the story of the world by overcoming the world. Now God and humanity are reconciled under a new covenant. Now the relationship between creator and creation is richer and more complex. Now the Resurrection of one creates hope for all.

One of my favorite things about this story is how it brings some sober realism to the old canard that Jesus was not really resurrected, but only his disciples' respect for his memory, or obedience to his teachings, was restored. People who deny the historicity of the Resurrection sometimes speak of Jesus being "risen" in the hearts of his disciples. As if wishful thinking were inspirational, let alone transformational. As if warm thoughts would compel people to become apostles, to give up everything to proclaim a lie, even their own lives.

But we don't even need to consider the record of the apostolic age because, right here in the Gospel itself, we see all ten disciples trying to convince *one of their own* to accept news that he would have wanted to believe, news that had united them despite their earlier squabbling, news that gave them courage, hope, and joy— and it falls flat. The notion of a so-called "spiritual resurrection" in the hearts of the disciples has been a spectacular failure from the first and best chance it ever had. Thomas didn't want a feeling or a memory, he wanted Jesus.

And then, the risen Christ rejoins his friends. An encounter with the risen Christ, his very physical body still bearing the marks of his passion, in a moment succeeded where who knows how much hot air had failed. An instant in the presence of the risen Christ made a notorious skeptic blurt out the greatest expression of faith spoken by anyone in John's Gospel: "My Lord and my God!" Encountering Jesus, Thomas realized that the Crucifixion had not been the end of a tragedy, but the beginning of a victory.

The fact of Resurrection, the objective, physical fact, changes things, since that's what God intended for it to do. The fact of Resurrection is why Jesus's words to us, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe," give us such hope and joy. It is inseparable from Jesus's teachings, for it is the confirmation of his authority, and it gave eyewitnesses, and hand-witnesses, and side-witnesses, the courage to proclaim the Good News of the whole story of Jesus and hand it down to us.

The fact of Resurrection is what connects us to God, and what makes us one body with those who did see, and believe. If Resurrection can change the very genre of the story of creation from tragedy to triumph, can overcome sin and death and hell, and replace them with grace and peace and life, what do you think Resurrection can change in you?