

Hello, my name is Thomas. I want to tell you about an amazing time in my life. It was nothing short of a wild emotional roller coaster ride.

I was up and down, and back up again.

It all started while I was with Jesus, when he was on earth. I was one of his twelve disciples.

We were amazed at His teachings.

We saw him do amazing miracles.
People who hadn't walked in years were now walking.
People born blind could now see.

None of us ever really understood what was going on.

The real emotional roller coaster started one day when we found out that Jesus's good friend Lazarus was very ill.

Lazarus lived in Bethany, which was close to the city of Jerusalem.

Now, lately Jesus had been stirring things up and the religious leaders didn't like him.

He said that he wanted to go see Lazarus, but we reminded him that the religious leaders had already tried to kill him.

Lazarus died before we got there, but Jesus wanted to continue.

I said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." I was positive that something bad would happen.

I guess you could say that I've always had a gloomy attitude.

But it was amazing. When we got to Bethany, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

A few days later, Jesus was riding a donkey into the city.

Crowds gathered shouting praises to Jesus.

It was great.

A few days later, we were gathered in a room.

We were getting ready to celebrate the Passover meal.

Jesus walked over and picked up a water bowl.

He began to wash our feet.

Judas, one of us, took off in the middle of dinner. No one knew where he was going.

After Judas left, Jesus began to talk about Peter denying him.

Then it seemed like he was trying to comfort us.

Jesus began to talk about going somewhere.

I said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

When he replied, I wasn't quite sure what he was talking about.

He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one come to the Father except through me."

After dinner, Jesus was acting kind of distracted.

He said he wanted to go and pray, but we were so tired.

We went to a garden. He told us to pray, but we couldn't stay awake.

We were awakened by a mob, led by Judas, coming up the path.

Judas kissed Jesus.

The temple guards arrested Jesus.

Peter grabbed his sword and cut the ear off a guard.

Jesus told him to put the sword away.

We got scared and ran.

This was it. The end was near.

Many of us crept around keeping an eye on the events from a distance.

Jesus was taken to the Temple. Then he was taken to Pilate, the Roman governor.

He was sentenced to death.

I knew this would happen.

Jesus was beaten unmercifully.

He was forced to drag his cross to the hill called Calvary.

They nailed him to the cross.

Within a few days, it had gone from the crowds praising him to him being hammered to a cross.

It was over. I couldn't believe it. I just wanted to be alone. It was all over.

Peter, John and the others got together a couple days later, but I couldn't do it. Seeing those guys again would just bring back all the old memories.

We had spent three years with Jesus. I couldn't make sense of it all.

I had to be alone. I had no idea what to do next.

About a week after the other guys got together, I ran into some of them.

They told me a fantastic story.

They said, "We have seen the Lord!"

How could that be? He was dead. He was as dead as dead could be. I had seen it. His hands and feet had been nailed to a hunk of wood.

To make sure that he was dead, the Roman soldiers had stabbed Him in the side with a spear.

Blood and water came out.

Now I'm no biologist, but I know ***that means*** he was dead.

No one comes back from such a brutal death.

Sure Lazarus came back, but he had been sick.

But, Jesus' death was so brutal. How could he be back?

I told them that I wouldn't believe unless I saw it. I told them point blank, "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."

I had heard of people seeing things before. But how could it be?

The next time they got together, I was with them.

If Jesus was going to show up, I wanted to see it.

We were all there. And Just as I was getting ready to say, "Well? Where is he?" he showed up.

He was right there. The door was locked. How did he get in?

He said, "Peace be with you!"

WOW! I couldn't believe my eyes.

Jesus looked straight at me and said, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out you hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

What could I do? I said, "My Lord and my God!"

I had seen it, and I believed.

The roller coaster that had been up and down, was now back up.

I looked at the other guys.

Jesus didn't criticize me for not believing. He just offered me himself as proof that he was alive.

I had a personal encounter with the risen Christ. I was amazed. I was comforted.

I was changed.

The other disciples gathered around me.

They didn't say, "See, we told you so." They just put their arms around me. They were happy that I believed.

Jesus then offered some reassuring words to me,

"Because you have seen me, you have believed;

blessed are those who have not seen ***and have*** believed."

I had seen it and believed, but not everyone would have the opportunity to see the physical scars of Jesus.

I was beyond excited..

Then Jesus gave us a job to do: to tell others what we had seen and heard.

Those of you, who believe, are blessed because you haven't seen Jesus' physical wounds.

I ask you now, have you had a personal encounter with the Risen Christ?

Have you been amazed, comforted and changed?

Have you had an encounter with Jesus that caused you to say, "My Lord and my God!"?

If you have, you should tell somebody the story.

Jesus just did not just give the disciples a job to do.

He gave us all a job to do.

And that job is to tell the story of salvation,,, through the Risen Christ

so that everyone can have life in His name.