# **Week** A logo with yellow wheat ears AI-generated content may be incorrect.**3: Sermon**

# **From Doubter to Confessor**

# **John 20:24-31**

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**Introduction**



Many of us who are Christians cannot imagine why someone would not want to become a Christian. For those of us who have experienced firsthand the joy, peace, love, grace, mercy, compassion and tenderness of Jesus Christ, our hearts break when we see lost and broken people choose to continue living in their lostness and brokenness. Because we know, we have experienced the reality that forgiveness and healing are standing right in front of them in Jesus Christ. We think, “if they only knew…”

On the other hand, many of us have heard some of the horror stories of the lives of others. And when we have heard some of their stories, we can understand why believing in an all loving God might sound like a religion for suckers. We think of the abandoned spouse who thinks Jesus’ offer of forgiveness is not realistic because they could never forgive that spouse who hurt them so deeply. We can understand, when we hear the story of a child abandoned by their parents, why that abandoned child might think unconditional love is just too good to be true. Simply telling someone God loves them, simply telling them Jesus wants to save them, is often not enough to convince them. They have questions. They have doubts.

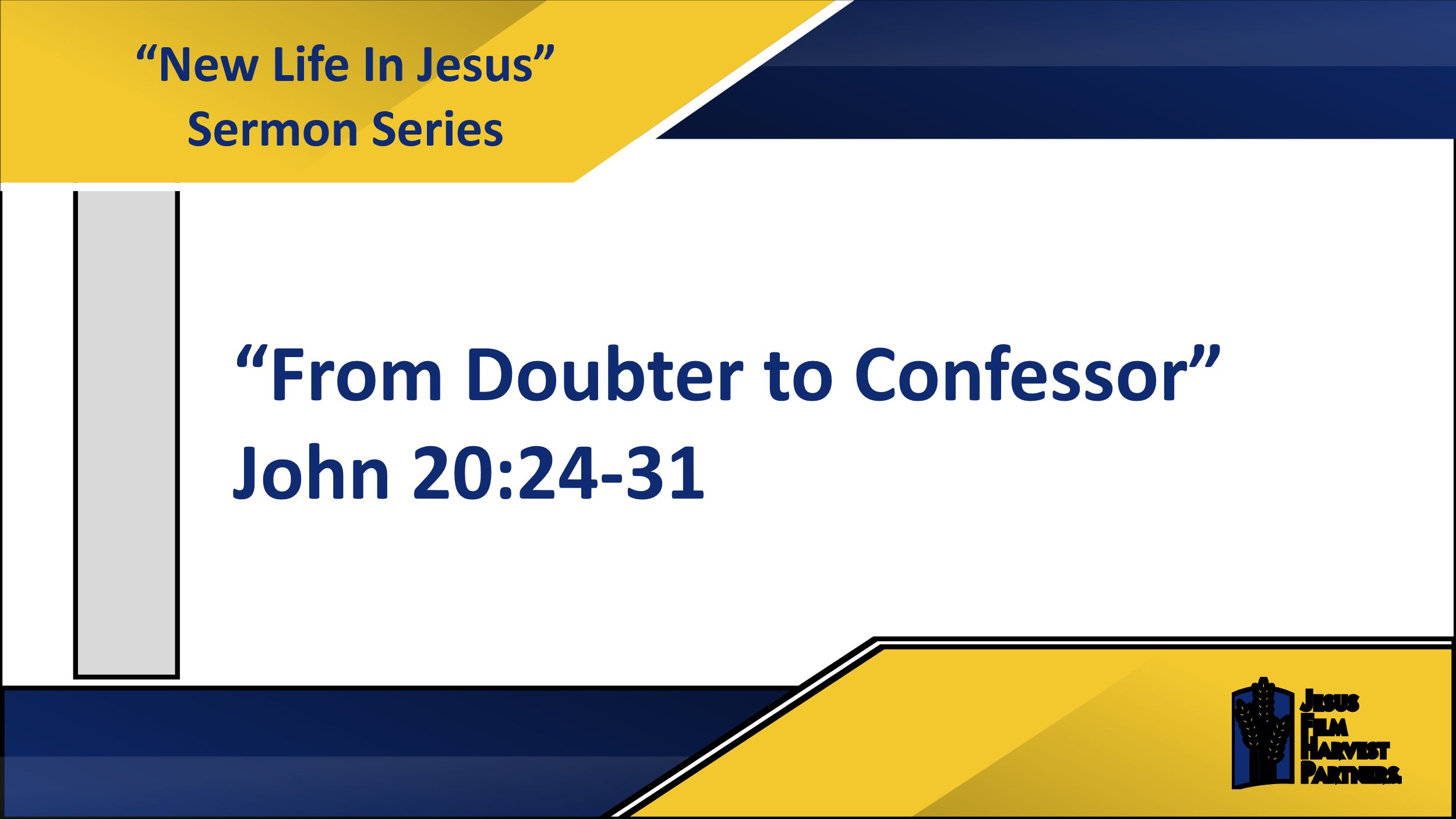
Maria, from Venezuela, was filled with resentment because she was abandoned by her birth parents at an early age. And even though two Christians parents adopted and raised her in a loving home, she grew up with such bitterness and anger at the birth parents who abandoned her that he despised Jesus for having allowed her life to be one of such pain. Then one day she saw the *JESUS* film, and something changed in her heart. For the first time she experienced the love of God. For the first time she says she *“really knew God’s love that day.”* She said she realized,

*“God could not change my past, but I wanted Him to change my present and my future. Today I serve Him with all my heart and have learned to forgive all those who hurt me. And I am grateful for the family God gave me.”*

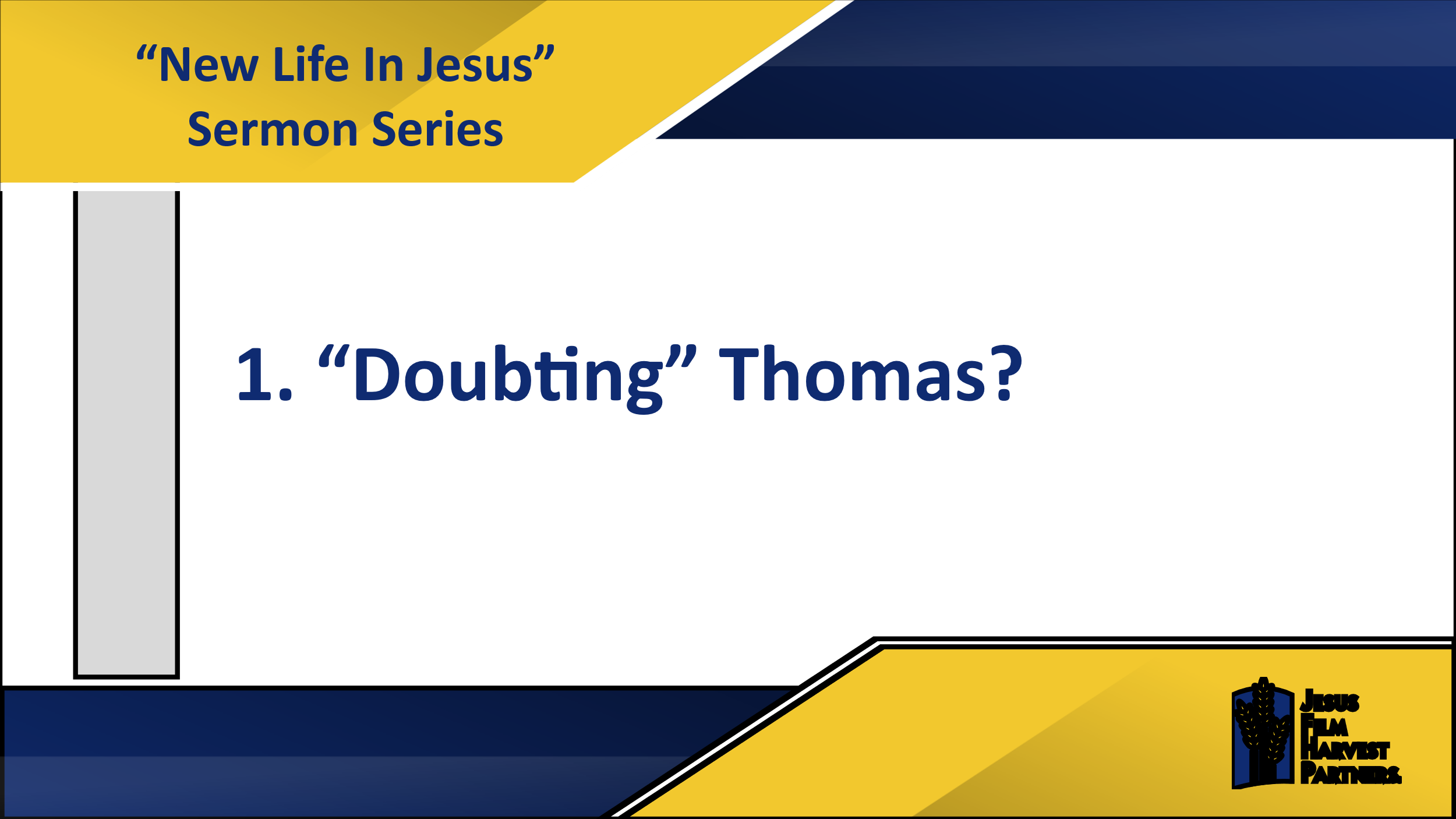
Again, for many people it is not enough to just hear Jesus loves them, to hear there is forgiveness of sins. Instead, they need to experience the love of Jesus in real and tangible ways**.** Their doubts are real, their hurt is real, their pain is real. However, we who have experienced the relentless love of God know, God is greater than all their doubts and can bring healing to all their hurts and pain. Most often, not in an instant. However, if they surround themselves with Christians, immerse themselves in scripture study, and learn how to have open and honest prayer times with Jesus, God will bring a complete and radical transformation in their life.

As we continue to study four post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to His followers, we come today to someone who throughout Christian history has been known for his skepticism. We know him as Doubting Thomas.

**Read John 20:24-31**



**1. “Doubting” Thomas?**



**How many of you here today think “Doubting Thomas” has gotten a bad rap over the centuries?**

How many people do you know who are eager to believe someone could just rise from the dead after being dead three days? Where is the evidence? Was it Thomas’ fault he was not around the last time Jesus showed up – which was seven whole days ago? I’m sure Thomas asked, several times, “If Jesus is alive, where is He, and where has He been?”

On the other hand, Mary Madgalene had to be pretty convincing when she said, “I have seen the Lord!” to have Peter and John immediately take off running for the tomb. And that same day Jesus did appear to the rest of the disciples and did prove He was bodily alive. Everyone must have been reminiscing about the past week, remembering all the several times Jesus had told them He was going to be crucified, and had told them He would rise again after three days. Mary’s eyewitness testimony, plus the other disciples’ eyewitness testimonies, plus all the remembrances of Jesus telling them this is exactly what would happen must have made some impact on Thomas.

**How many of you here today think “Doubting Thomas” has NOT gotten a bad rap over the centuries?**

There is a lot we do not know about what Thomas was thinking and feeling that caused him to be so skeptical. But there is a lot we know about what happened when Jesus finally showed up again. First, He did not shun Thomas, He approached Thomas. Second, when He spoke to Thomas, He did not criticize him but invited him to do exactly what Thomas said he would have to do in order to believe - touch Him and confirm He was bodily alive. Third, Jesus does not say, “You blew your one chance to believe in me,” instead, He invites Thomas, “believe.”

And how does Thomas respond? He does not put his finger in Jesus’ nail scarred hand. He does not reach out his hand and put it in Jesus’ side. Instead, he responds with one of the most powerful confessions of faith known to humanity: “My Lord and my God!” Not just “Lord and God!” Thomas confesses, “**My** Lord and **My** God!”

As it was for Maria, so it appears to be the same for Thomas: for many people it is not enough to just hear Jesus loves them, to just hear there is forgiveness of sins. Instead, they need to experience the love of Jesus in real and tangible ways.

**2. Taking Off the Blindfolds**



Who here is eternally grateful that God does not demand perfect obedience, or perfect understanding, but instead invites us to trust Him with our whole heart? Wherever you fall on whether Thomas should be known as the Doubter or not, I think we can all agree that when Jesus met him face to face, in the flesh, his love for Jesus overcame any doubts, skepticism, or hesitancy he had been holding onto.

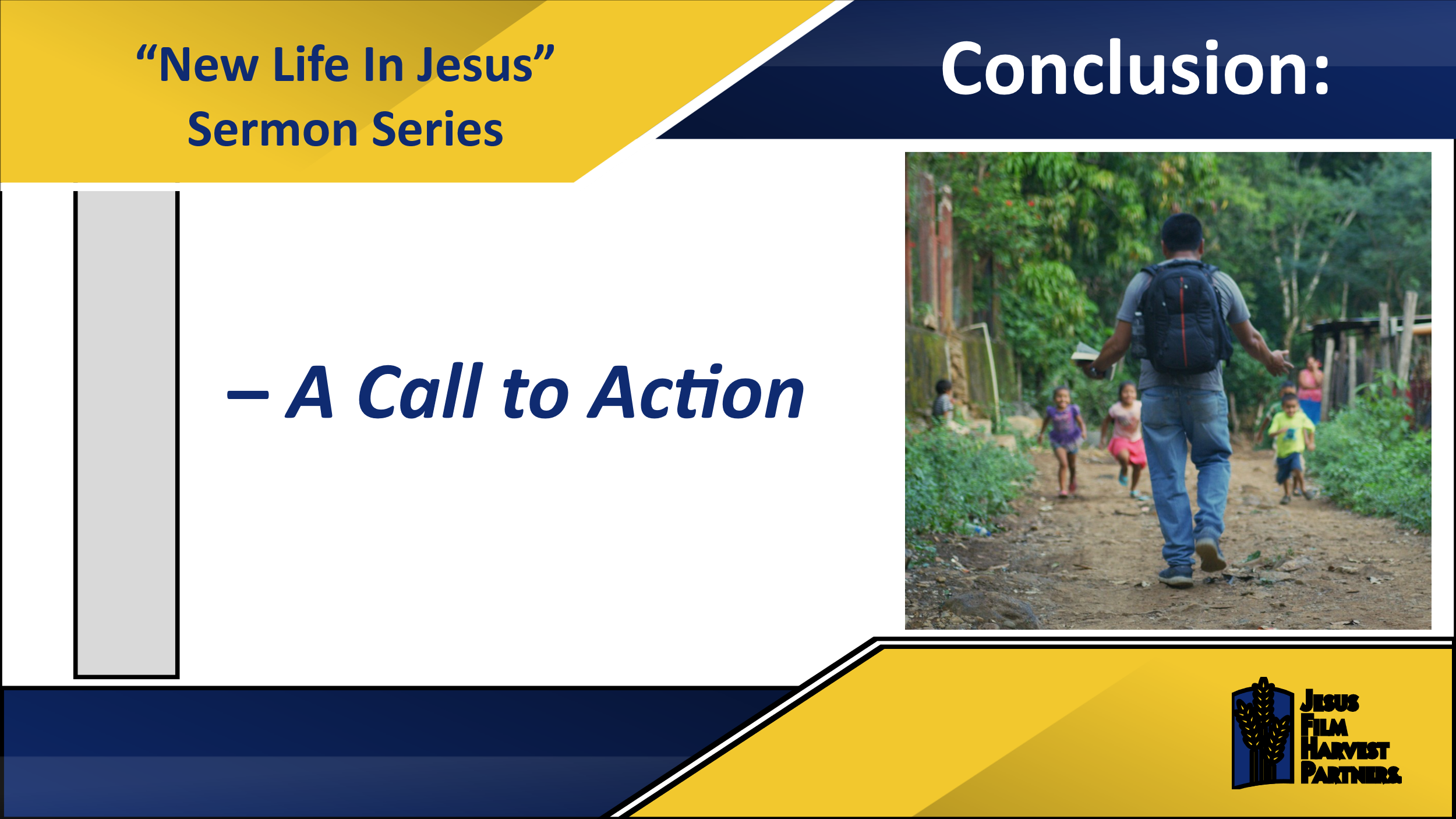
Jesus does not demand that we clean up our lives, make ourselves presentable, and then find our way to heaven before He will forgive us. Just the opposite, the more we try to clean up our lives, the more we try to look presentable, the more we try to make ourselves worthy of Jesus’ forgiveness, the further away we get from it. Jesus does not demand of Thomas, “be more perfect!” Instead, Jesus invites him, “stop doubting and believe.”

Mateo in Mexico shares how Jesus took the blindfolds off his eyes and helped him see clearly the great wonders that come when we walk with Jesus. Setbacks and failures marked Mateo’s life. Health problems and money problems also constantly plagued Mateo’s life. He tried to find ways to solve his problems through counseling, through medical treatments, through witch doctors. Unfortunately, though, all that happened was he went further and further into debt, losing more and more of his will to live.

But then one day a family member invited him to a *JESUS* film showing. And, in watching the film, for the first time he realized his purpose in life was not to make money or to be successful. The purpose of his life was allowing Jesus to transform his heart and soul. And now that the blindfold fell off his eyes, he could see the importance of walking with Jesus, of being a good father, of being a good spouse.

For some people, they doubt God’s goodness and love because of their past pain and trouble. But other people, in fact many people who sit in churches each Sunday, doubt God’s goodness as well. They are quick to give God all their problems, but they are slow to trust God with all their possessions. They are quick to talk about how God forgave their sins years ago, but they are slow to talk about what God is doing in their life today. Many people are afraid that if they really give Jesus all their heart, all their soul, all their mind, all their strength, then Jesus might just ask them to step out of their comfort zone and do something significant for the Kingdom of God. And they doubt whether they can trust Jesus to follow through on His promises.

**Conclusion**



What about you? Are there any doubts lingering in your heart or mind about God’s goodness? Are you afraid if you really give God all your pain and all your brokenness, that He might not bring healing?

The Good News this morning is you can trust God. Your parents may have disappointed you; a spouse may have abandoned you, your life may seem like an overwhelming mess right now, but Jesus knows how to bring healing to your present and your future. As well as peace with your past. Jesus knows what will bring you peace and joy. Jesus knows you need more than just promises and Bible verses. That is why Jesus brings people into your life who will support you, pray for you, help you, counsel you, love you. Some of those people may be in this church this morning. Some of them may be at your school, your work, or a trusted friend who is always just a phone call away.

Jesus’ invitation to you this morning, just as it was to Yanny, to Mateo, and to Thomas, “believe I love you, believe I can heal you, believe I only want the best for you.” Will you believe this morning?

**Call to Action: *Find ways to encourage Christians in your life.*** Being a Christian is more than a one-time decision to receive salvation. It is an open, honest, and obedient daily relationship with Jesus Christ. Identify some Christians in your life who may need encouragement and support in their spiritual life. Pray for them this week, and then reach out to them, as God leads, and find a way to encourage them to be persistent in their Christian walk.