

Faith With Doubt

John 20:19-31
College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa

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There is a kind of faith we are often taught to admire—steady, certain, unshakable. A faith that never wavers, never questions, never hesitates. It's the kind of faith that seems to have everything figured out, tied up neatly with clear answers and confident declarations. But if we're honest, that kind of faith can sometimes feel... distant. Even unattainable. Because most of us don't live there. Most of us live somewhere closer to Thomas.

In this story from the Gospel of John, the disciples are not bold or triumphant. They are not standing on street corners proclaiming resurrection. They are hiding. The doors are locked. John tells us they are afraid—afraid of the authorities, afraid of what might happen next, afraid that the violence that claimed Jesus might come for them too. The crucifixion has not only broken their hearts—it has shattered their sense of safety, their understanding of how the world works, even their trust in what they thought they knew about God. And into that locked room—into that fear—Jesus comes. No knocking. No warning. Just presence. **"Peace be with you."**

It's not just a greeting. It's a gift. Because peace is the very thing they do not have. And then Jesus shows them his hands and his side. The wounds are still there. That detail matters. **Resurrection does not mean pretending the pain never happened.** It does not erase the trauma or undo the suffering. The risen Christ still bears the marks of the cross. Which means that whatever resurrection is, it is not denial—it is transformation. It is the healing of wounds that are not forgotten. And the disciples rejoice. Of course they do. Fear gives way, at least for a moment, to joy.

But Thomas is not there. And **Thomas becomes, for many of us, the most relatable disciple in the room.** When the others tell him, "We have seen the Lord," Thomas refuses to simply accept their testimony. He says: "Unless I see... unless I touch... I will not believe." It's easy to hear that as stubbornness. As negativity. As a lack of faith. But listen more closely. **Thomas is not asking for anything the other disciples have not already received.** They saw. They experienced. They were given proof through presence. Thomas is simply saying: **I need my own encounter. I cannot live on borrowed faith.** And that may be one of the most honest spiritual statements in all of scripture. Because **borrowed faith can only take us so far.**

At some point, each of us has to wrestle with our own questions: Is this story true—for me? Is God real—in my life? Does resurrection mean anything—in the face of my grief, my doubts, my lived experience? **We cannot inherit faith the way we inherit traditions or rituals. At some point, faith has to become personal. And that journey often leads us through doubt.** Not around it. Through it.

A week passes. We don't know what that week was like for Thomas. But we can imagine. A week of hearing others speak with certainty while he remains unsure. A week of wondering if he missed his one chance. A week of feeling isolated—even among friends. And maybe some of us know that feeling too. Sitting in church, hearing

others sing with conviction, speak with confidence, pray with assurance—while inside, we are full of questions. Wondering: *Why doesn't it feel that way for me?*

But notice this: **Thomas does not leave the community. Even in his doubt, he stays connected. He keeps showing up. He remains in the room, even if he cannot fully share in their belief.** And that matters. Because doubt can be isolating—but it doesn't have to be. **Faith communities are not meant to be collections of certainty. They are meant to be spaces where we can hold one another's questions, where we can belong even when belief feels fragile.**

And then—once again—Jesus comes. The doors are still shut. The fear has not magically disappeared. The circumstances have not changed. But Jesus shows up anyway. “Peace be with you.” And then he turns directly to Thomas. It's as if Jesus has been listening all along. “Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” But even here, I wonder if we've misunderstood what Jesus is saying. Because this does not feel like a scolding. It feels like an **invitation.**

Jesus is not rejecting Thomas' doubt—he is entering into it. He offers exactly what Thomas asked for. Not as a test to pass, but as a relationship to deepen. And Thomas responds: “My Lord and my God!” It is the most direct and personal confession of faith in the entire gospel. And it comes—not from blind belief—but from honest doubt met by compassionate presence. That's important. Because it suggests that **doubt is not the opposite of faith. Apathy is the opposite of faith. Indifference is the opposite of faith. But doubt? Doubt is engaged. Doubt is wrestling. Doubt is refusing to settle for easy answers.** Doubt is often what faith looks like when it is taking God seriously.

And yet, many of us have been taught to fear our doubts. We've been told that questions are dangerous. That uncertainty is weakness. That faith means having everything resolved. But if that were true, Thomas would be excluded from the story. Instead, he is at the very center of it. And not only that—his story has been preserved, told, and retold for generations. Which means the early church did not hide doubt. They honored it. They recognized that **faith is not a straight line. It is a journey—full of twists and turns, clarity and confusion, conviction and questioning. And Jesus meets us in all of it.**

Then come those final words: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” At first glance, it might sound like a contrast—a gentle correction of Thomas. But perhaps it is something more expansive. Because Jesus is now speaking beyond that room—to future generations. To people like us. We who will not see with our eyes. We who will not touch the wounds. We who live in a world where resurrection is something we trust more than something we verify.

And yet—we are called blessed. Not because our faith is stronger. Not because our doubts are fewer. But because we continue to seek, to trust, to hope—even without certainty. And maybe **that's the invitation of this story: Not to eliminate doubt, but to make room for it. Not to pretend certainty, but to practice trust. Not to have all the answers, but to remain open to encounter.** Because resurrection faith is not about having everything figured out. It's about recognizing the presence of Christ in unexpected places: In communities that hold us when we struggle. In acts of love that defy despair. In moments of peace that arrive without explanation. In wounds—our own and others'—that begin, slowly, to heal.

So if you find yourself today more like Thomas than the others—if your faith feels complicated... If your questions feel unresolved... If belief comes with hesitation rather

than certainty... **Take heart. You are not failing at faith. You are engaging it. You are participating in a story that has always made room for doubt.** And the good news—the really good news—is this: The risen Christ does not wait on the other side of your certainty. He meets you right in the middle of your questions. Right behind your locked doors. Right within your hesitant prayers. Right alongside your searching heart. Offering not condemnation—but peace. “Peace be with you.”

So if you find yourself today with questions—If your faith feels uncertain—If belief comes harder than it once did—Take heart. **You are not outside the story. You are standing right in the middle of it.** Because the risen Christ still comes to people like Thomas. Still comes to people like us. Still speaks peace into our doubts. And maybe—just maybe—**It is not despite our doubts that we encounter God... But through them.**

Amen.

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