

# Faithful Doubt

Acts 2:14a, 22-32; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

When we encounter someone who asks for more evidence when we tell them something we earnestly believe to be true, we just might call them a “Doubting Thomas.”

“I’ve seen it with my own eyes; why don’t you believe me?”

The nickname comes from today’s Gospel lesson, in which Thomas has a hard time believing the news that Jesus has been raised from the dead. He’s the poster boy for skeptics.

Thomas’s is the story for those who make their own way, those who cannot inherit religion, but who struggle to figure out what is true for themselves.

I’m here today to tell you that Thomas’s so-called “doubt” is an important dynamic of faith.

We like certainty ... to believe what we believe “beyond the shadow of a doubt.”

We also like to think that we believe what we believe based on “the facts” alone ... and that if other people are just exposed to these same facts, they would “come around” and see it our way.

Consider these Facebook posts –

- “I’m not arguing ... I’m explaining why I’m right.”
- “Be reasonable ... See it my way.”

Would that life were so cut and dried!

Neuroscientists study the human brain and how it works ...

- They say that both feeling and reasoning happen in the brain ... and that thinking and deciding involves both.
- Have you ever decided to do something before thinking it through?
  - Most of the time, we consider the information at hand, then do what feels right.
- Sometimes, we may even think things through, and act accordingly.

The Gospel story of Thomas gives us insight into the inner workings of faith in our lives ...

Thomas says that he needs to touch the risen Christ ... Why? We don’t know ... but what if his thinking was catching up with had already grabbed his heart? Why else would he make such a strong statement?

Jesus appears ... does not scold Thomas for his questioning ... but invites Thomas to touch him ...

But there is no report that Thomas does reach out to touch Jesus ... What if he believes because the risen Christ has touched him?

Questions seem to be the norm in the Bible ... When Mary asks “How can this be?” after she learns that she will give birth to the Messiah ... she is working to bring feelings and understanding together.

This same mix of feeling and reason is at play when we fall in love ... something about another person attracts us ... then we decide what to do ...

“Love is both something that happens to you and something you decide upon,” says Donald Miller in his book, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*.

Miller continues: “I have come to think that belief is something that happens to us, too. Sure, there is some data involved, but mostly it is this deep, deep conviction ...”

Thomas believes because Christ came alive in his heart ... and he responds in worship ... “My Lord and my God!”

Thomas’s is the story for the ones who make their own way, those who cannot inherit religion, but who struggle to figure out what is true for themselves.

Many of us who remain on this journey have had a personal encounter with the holy that is at the heart of our journey as Christians.

We realize faith, even if lifelong and the tradition of our ancestors, through some personal experience, which can be mystical or ordinary.

Thomas illustrates this truth. Although many of us do rely on the teachings and experience of church tradition, we are all dependent on a personal, deep knowing or a persistence in questioning that brings us to communities of faith.

Whether we are lifelong Christians, new to the faith, or still exploring from the edges, Jesus invites us all to reach out and touch him, as Thomas did.

There is no judgment for asking questions or for needing a little more convincing than someone else. We are all on the journey together, sharing our stories as we grow closer to one another and to the Lord.

A Preacher's Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series: Thematic Plans for Years A, B, and C (Kindle Locations 930-943). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Blessed be the Lord, who has given us a new birth into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen.