

**Second Sunday of Easter
April 11, 2021**

Scripture: John 20:19 – 31

I DOUBT IT!

I doubt it! How many times have I, have we said this and just why have we said that? Perhaps we were not sure or maybe we were convinced that the issue was simply not true. Maybe we were just questioning ourselves.

Go ahead and prove it to me, even though I think that I know it's true. Have we actually meant that? Maybe? Probably!

On this Sunday, the second Sunday of Easter, the most preached scripture concerns the Disciple Thomas, who as we know was not with the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them, as found in John 20: 24.

Thomas' skepticism earned him the nickname, "doubting Thomas", which has become a name for those of us who need real proof before believing something. It should be noted that the term "doubting Thomas" does not appear anywhere in the Bible. It is because of Thomas' statement at John 20:25 – "unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe", that he became burdened with that title.

Thomas is not really a major character in the Bible {he's mentioned only 8 times and 4 of these are just in lists of the disciples }

So why does Thomas get the rap and the title for doubting? Why does it seem that he is the only doubter among the disciples? Most of the disciples had real doubts!!

Throughout the entire time of Jesus' ministry, the disciples questioned and doubted and questioned and doubted and, and, and!

See for example:

Matt; 28:17 during the commissioning of the disciples in Galilee after the resurrection, we read, "When they (disciples) saw him (Jesus) they worshipped him; but some doubted"

Matt: 14:31 when Jesus asks Peter to walk to him on water and Peter begins to sink, Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Matt 21: 21 when Jesus curses the fig tree (the only cursing miracle in the gospels emphasizing the power of faith) and the disciples were amazed, he says, “Truly I tell you if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘be lifted up and thrown into the sea’ it will be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith you will receive.”

Matt 17:17-20 regarding curing a boy who was demon possessed, Jesus says, “you faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you...”. The disciples had asked Jesus, “why could we not cast out the demon”. Jesus replied, “because of your little faith”.

Mark 4: 40-41 during the storm, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” The disciples said to each other, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

In all of these citations, were the disciples doubting or questioning? I can suggest many other references of, “little faith”, but these will give us enough of an idea.

Let us then, continue our journey with Thomas for a bit.

We know from scripture that he was close to Jesus; spent three years with him; witnessed his miracles; heard his teachings. Thomas heard Jesus predict his resurrection as we read at John 12: 27-36, but he just needed to see the proof for himself! Remember that Thomas was not present when Jesus first appeared to the disciples.

Let’s go back to my opening statement – I doubt it!

Have you ever been promised that you were to receive a monetary rebate from something? You believed the truth of the statement, however, you waited, maybe anxiously, until the rebate check arrived in the mail or was deposited to your bank account.

Were you doubting the truth of the rebate or seeking the proof of the promise?

It seems to me that Thomas was in a similar but much more serious position. He knew Jesus so very well, and he so very much wanted to be comforted by seeing the absolute proof of his belief in friend Jesus' resurrection. It seems that Thomas allowed his doubt to turn into a lack of trust

When, at the second appearance of Jesus to the disciples; when Thomas was present; when Jesus asked him to touch him, although there is no proof in scripture that he did touch him, it is then that Thomas says, "My Lord and My God". It is then that Jesus speaks not only to Thomas, but to the disciples and to each of us! Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe".

Doubting is not the issue. Questioning might be part of the issue. Believing is the issue!

We now see that Jesus has pronounced his blessing on the church of the future; that through believing, we may have life in his name.

As Jesus prayed in John 17:20;

"I ask not only on behalf of these (disciples), but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Here ends Jesus' prayer.

I believe that we should use doubt to keep us aware of dangers, but we should not let doubt weaken our faith.

So, I leave you with some questions.

Have you ever doubted something?

Why have you ever doubted?

Have you ever questioned something which you really believed was true, but for which you just needed more proof or *maybe more faith*?

AMEN

William S. Bray

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