

Can I Doubt?

Scripture: John 20: 19-38

Date: April 26, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Two weeks ago, we celebrated Easter through the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Despite not being able to gather corporately the central moments of the Christian faith were still celebrated around the globe.

Yet as the days have progressed - for some that optimism has faded as the reality of our world has pressed in on our lives. Hopes for an end to the dangers of Covid 19 and the return to 'normal' flicker as Covid 19 flu still doesn't have a vaccine – much less a treatment. Front line workers are wearing down and there are increasing divisions between groups over the best course of action to come.

Parts of life that we declared under God's control seem more chaos and confusion and our confidence in the future seems in doubt.

DOUBT

DEFINITION

The definition of doubt in its simplest terms is an uncertainty of an expected result or that the result is unreliable in its occurrence. The Bible identifies Thomas as the doubter but was he really?

DISTANT (UNRELIABLE)

Thomas was not there with the disciples on Easter Sunday. He was somewhere else - we don't know where but it's clear he was not with the other group. Perhaps he was too overwhelmed with grief, perhaps he wasn't as afraid. Thomas is described in John 11: 6 as one who was not afraid of dying for / with Jesus. Yet after three years with the same group of disciples – when they gathered together in grief Thomas was not there.

DENIAL (INCONSISTENT)

Thomas response to the claims of the disciples – and the women - was denial. Thomas' reputation in the gospels was a believer but Thomas was no fool. His sense of reality in Bethany was matched by his inquisitiveness. He asks questions - he wants to be sure and in John 14: 5 after Jesus speaks of going ahead and preparing a place for the disciples. Thomas asks - where are you going Jesus and how will we know to follow.

Thomas' loyalty to Jesus is not in question but he's still trying to figure out what was happening and why. He knows that resurrection IS possible - he saw Lazarus raised BY Jesus. But how would Jesus raise himself back to life – it doesn't make sense.

Regardless of how loyal you are, regardless of how many questions you ask - sometimes you just need some proof, something tangible to grasp onto.

US

Perhaps there's much of Thomas in us as well. Events like Easter or Christmas form the foundation of our faith but the rest of the year its hard. Its hard now when we can't gather together – at least physically. But we can become isolated more than just physically - we can also become isolated spiritually.

Likewise, in our faith the distance feeds into a sense of denial. We can see the suffering of the world more than the Saviour of the world, we can see the hardship of the world more than the Holy One and we can see the pain of the world more than the promise of God. We look inward – even outward – to see God rather than upward and we doubt. We doubt God and we doubt ourselves

DECLARATION

But God is not angered by our doubts and neither does God condemn us for our doubts. He uses them as a starting place for conversation. A conversation that declares His grace. A grace that takes non belief / disbelief and offers opportunity for belief

DISCIPLES

The disciples having encountered the risen Lord seek out Thomas and speak to him of their experience. In verse 25 the Greek words for *they* and *told* have an impact that understandings repetition - ongoingly the disciples spoke to Thomas.

Their excitement over the event and their passion for their friend to accept increases their commitment to communicate these truths to Thomas. It is effective as a week later – Thomas is with them

JESUS

If the definition of doubt stems from questions of unreliability and inconsistency then the response to trust would be competence and character. In this context then Jesus – and only Jesus – can speak to Thomas. To reassure him of the consistency of the gospel of good news and the reliability that only He can bring.

GRACE IN WORDS

Jesus enters the room and speaks Peace. The Greek work - Eirene – speaks of tranquility and harmony. Reassuring Thomas – and all else - that He's coming with grace. A grace that's not meant to overwhelm and a grace that's meant to illuminate. A grace that illustrates that He's coming with proof to convince and to certify His authority and His reliability.

GRACE IN DEEDS

Jesus offers to Thomas the opportunity to touch the wounds. he specific proof he asked for – was given. To prove that Jesus was not a ghost but rather a gracious God. As a result Thomas' faith was now cemented - His questions answered and His doubt removed. Jesus is willing to do what Thomas needed and perhaps that willingness – that grace – was sufficient !!

THOMAS

Thomas's response is simple and yet incredibly powerful - My Lord and My God! Thomas declares My LORD and My God affirming the deity and glory of Jesus as John earlier described in John 1: 1 – Jesus IS God. In addition, affirming John 14: 7 where Jesus declares - if you've seen Him then you've seen the Father. No more doubts – no more wavering – as His declaration cements the certainty within Thomas – forever

MY Lord and MY God also affirming the covenant that God would be our God and we will be His people. Thomas now owns the relationship committing himself to Jesus - once and for all - forever

APPLICATION / CONCLUSION

Can we doubt – yes! Doubts are not a weakness to fail but rather doubts are opportunities to fly. To seek God and to trust in God/

Can we declare – yes. That God is true for us, in us and by His grace through us. That Jesus is our God and that we believe in Him even when we can't see Him - except by faith. That Jesus is our Lord and that we will follow and obey even when we can't prove it - except by faith!

AMEN