

I come to you in the name of one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Stop me if you've heard this sermon before: Thomas doubts to shows us that it is ok to doubt, in fact Thomas is my favorite saint because I have doubts and thanks to his example that is ok! It is a common trope to set Thomas up as this very human reaction to the fantastical nature of the story the disciples tell of meeting the risen Lord. Thomas is here to speak to our rational side. Thomas is here in this story, to enable Christ to make a proclamation to comfort us, since we do not get to experience the risen Lord like the disciples gathered the first night or Thomas on the second night. But, I feel like Thomas has been morphed into this idealized version of doubt. Thomas has become our excuse for our doubt. Thomas becomes our crutch that excuses our much deeper and very real feelings of doubt.

As human beings, we doubt. You cannot look at the example of the other disciples in this very story and then tell me that only Thomas is the doubter in this story. It is our preconceived notions of the order of the world that creates within us the instinctual response of doubt. It is no wonder that Thomas reacts the way he does, for all the followers of Christ seem to have forgotten the promises that were made about what would come following the death of Christ. And this is because the resurrection of Christ does not fit with our ordered understanding of the world. It does not stand up well to reason, to logic, to science (both then and now).

We use reason, logic, science to create an understanding of the ordering of the world, and in turn dictate that understanding back to the world. It is often said that science is our best attempt to explain the created world and the why of its existence. But what if we

looked at science from a different angle. What if instead of relying on science to proof the world for us, we take science at its face value as our best attempts to bring order and comprehension to a creation that is ultimately incomprehensible. If we rely solely on science to tell us the truths of this world, then it makes sense why God so loving God's creation that God's only Son, the Word made incarnate, Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, does not compute, because that level of love and devotion is both not measurable, nor recreatable, especially not in a lab.

Furthermore, if it is this power of love which enables the resurrection and the final teachings of Christ in his post-resurrected state, then the resurrection in particular cannot make sense if we have to prove it with our limited understanding of science. This is where our doubts can come from, this is where our doubts reflect what the disciples and Thomas experience today, but we have come to a point in time where doubt has become unacceptable. We have to a point in time where we as faithful followers pay lip service at best to our doubts. We have come to a point in time where those with real, foundational doubts, have been told they are unwelcome to be a part of this journey of faith. We have created an us vs them, when in reality, if we are truly honest with each other, we all experience the same doubts, but it is how we address (or not address) those doubts that influence our understanding of faith.

Too often, we are tempted to lean on Doubting Thomas as a crutch. By saying Thomas reflects our own understanding of doubt and then ignoring this story until the next Second Sunday of Easter, we do a disservice to the very real and powerful impact that doubt can have on our faith. When we lean on Doubting Thomas as that crutch which

protects our fragile understanding of the faith, a fragile understanding that is likely to shatter when something we cannot comprehend refuses to leave us, whether that be the violence of religious extremist groups, the devastating loss of a child, the eventual discovery of life on another planet, we keep ourselves from truly experiencing our faith. We avoid wrestling with our doubts. More importantly we avoid the why of our doubts. And, we avoid accepting the reality that our doubts are a foundational tool in our faith.

Doubt does not mean a lack of faith. Let me say that again, doubt DOES NOT mean a LACK of faith. In fact, I would argue that doubt is an imperative part of our faith. It is why we call it faith, because even through our doubts, even through acknowledging that there are parts of this story that ring as absurdly out of the realm of possibility (anyone else thinking of the feeding of the 5,000?), we still believe, and more still, we believe even though we will never be able to see. We will never be able to stick fingers in the holes. We will never get to sit at the feet of Christ on the mount. We will never share a meal with him and the disciples, gathered around, invigorated by this man and unaware that the more out there claims will come to pass.

I doubt. I wonder sometimes if I'm part of a big institution created by man to help fill the gaps that our reasoning brains cannot fill. I doubt because I have devoted my entire life to something that is not predicated on any concrete, solid evidence, but rather a handful of texts and a deep, engrossing tradition that have survived two millennia. This is both terrifying and exhilarating. It is in doing what I do that I understand my faith more than I ever have. I have taken that leap of faith to follow Christ without any of the precautions and reservations I normally hold when I make determinations in this world.

If you will allow me to be “one of those priests” for a moment, I’m going to use my child as an illustration for what I’m trying to explain with this sermon. I know biology. I know the science of how babies develop and grow in the womb. I understand that all mammals (except for a couple of weird ones) literally grow a new version within a special organ that has developed specifically for this purpose. I understand that we have developed the ability to produce everything that is necessary to protect our children, and have even developed man-made fail safes for when, for whatever reason, our bodies don’t cooperate the way they’re supposed to. This is amazing and the science that explains it all makes sense to me. And then my child was born. And it was so much more than I could ever imagine or explain. I know the scientific explanation of how she came to be, and yet, there was (and still is) something so amazing and special in her birth and subsequent growing that begs for something more than our basic reasoning can provide for. Her birth in many ways is an everyday miracle. It is something that has reaffirmed my faith, because it cuts through the necessity for reasoning everything out, for explaining everything in this creation, it begins to answer some doubts.

It is in acknowledging our doubts, embracing those doubts, and choosing to still have faith that is our call as followers. And, we are encouraged that even if we are those of little faith, at least we still have faith. We are not those of no faith. Our doubts may be prominent and weighing heavily, but we still have that little faith, because we engage with our doubts, we wrestle with what they mean, we enable ourselves to have faith because we do not shy away from the doubts that are a very real part of this life, this existence. In the song *Doubting Thomas* by Nickel Creek, I find lyrics that I think we can use to begin to

understand what it is we are to do with our doubts. They help me understand how our doubts will always be a part of us, and yet, even with that fact, it is through those same doubts that we can and will find our faith.

Can I be used to help others find truth

When I'm scared that I'll find proof that it's a lie

Can I be led down a trail dropping bread crumbs

To prove I'm not ready to die

Please give me time to decipher the signs

Please forgive me for time that I've wasted

I'm a doubting Thomas

I'll take your promise

Though I know nothing's safe

O' me of little faith

Amen.