

JOHN 20:19-29

Late that Sunday evening when the disciples were together behind locked doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you!" he said and then showed them his hands and his side. So when the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. Jesus repeated, "Peace be with you!" and said, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them, saying "Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive any man's sins, they stand forgiven. If you pronounce them unforgiven, unforgiven they remain."

One of the Twelve, Thomas, that is the Twin, was not with the rest when Jesus came. So the disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." He said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails on his hands, unless I put my finger into the place where the nails were and my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

A week later his disciples were again in the room, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, saying, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here. See my hands. Reach your finger here and put it into my side. Be unbelieving no longer, but believe," Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said, "Because you have seen me you have found faith.

Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith.”

EMBRACE YOUR DOUBT

John 20:19-29

Ah, Thomas. You had the courage to think for yourself, to give voice to your doubts when all the others were being swept away in euphoria following their encounter with their resurrected friend. In our modern vernacular, we can almost hear your response to their excited report: “Yeah...right!”

But you held fast, giving voice to your skepticism and your demand for more evidence than just their say-so. And we owe you a debt of gratitude for granting amnesty to all twenty-first century denizens of earth who refuse to swallow testimonies that lack verification we can trust. That has changed with cell phone videos and security cameras that have solved the “he said, she said” dilemmas. “The eye in the sky don’t lie.”

But Thomas did not have any such proof about the resurrection. For whatever reason, he was absent when Jesus made his cameo a week earlier during which he demonstrated physical evidence of the crucifixion thereby verifying the resurrection for any of the other disciples who were

struggling with their doubt. If you were Thomas, would you have simply accepted their word for it? Do you accept it today over 2000 years later? Don't we all harbor at least a measure of doubt over the resurrection accounts? Jesus anticipated this when he basically told his disciples, "*You have it easy. You have been blessed with a direct experience. You have touched me. You have physical evidence. For you, there is no longer room for doubt. But blessed are those who believe who have not seen.*" That's us! Sorry, no CCTV. The only thing we can do is take a leap of faith.

In the absence of such hard evidence there will always be ample opportunity for doubt to take root and grow. You cannot exterminate doubt. And while it is wonderful to have absolute certainty about anything, DNA evidence is not always available. So, doubt means there is a question to which seek an answer. Doubt seeks discovery. And the very act of seeking to discover opens our minds to possibilities. Isn't that the basis for scientific discovery and the engine behind evolutionary developments? Sometime in the past, someone expressed skepticism over harnessing wind to make electricity and someone else took up the challenge. Without doubt, we would never grow.

There will always be a tension between doubt and faith. It forces you to take a stand or forever wobble in between. And where you land affects the worldview, you hold and how you live your life. If you have decided that the purpose of your life is the acquisition of wealth and the exercise of the privilege and comfort that wealth affords, then that becomes the foundation of your faith as well. But as Jesus told his followers: *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

On the other hand, if you believe that we are all in this together, all children of the same God no matter what name we call that God, that when one suffers, we all suffer and that we are more than biological beings whose only observable purpose is to procreate in order to advance the evolution of the species, then perhaps there are benefits to taking a leap of faith in a different direction.

It is about the quality of our interior lives. It is about the advancement of love and being part of a community of faith that both nurtures us and attempts to make the expression of love a force of good in

a world that is continually rocked by evil and disasters. And I believe there is great peace to be derived from a faith that is firmly rooted in the conviction that God has Self-revealed through Jesus and continues and will continue to support us through the Holy Spirit that the risen Christ told his disciples to receive.

If we live with a joy, a treasure that it is not corroded by the rust of life nor stolen by bad investments or a depressed economy, then our lives have a purpose that is enduring. That is what leads to inner peace no matter the turmoil of life. It is no small thing when Jesus said, *Peace be with you.*

Embrace your Doubt! In her novel, *The Secret Chord*, which is a fictional account of King David's life and reign as narrated by his prophet, Nathan, who reflects on doubt as he is fretting over the year's grape harvest: *Doubt was like rot. Excise it at the first speckling, the first stain, the first faint stench of decay. But then—I suppose because my mind was on the wine—I thought of that other kind of rot, the soft gray fungus that sometimes afflicts the late grape harvest if the air turns unexpectedly moist. That rot causes the grapes to yield up a heavy, viscous juice of stupendously rich flavor. The wine pressed from such grapes was the best of all. Maybe doubt was like that sometimes. Maybe it too could*

yield rich fruit. Perhaps, then it was right to doubt. Perhaps I had a right to doubt.

You too have a right to doubt. But understand this: behind your doubt is a question about whether you need something more in your life than what the world has for sale. It is a living question. It breathes and it moves and if we follow it, it will direct us where we need to go.

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