

Believing Thomas – VIRTUAL WORSHIP SERVICE EDITION
Rev. Curtis Webster
Westminster Presbyterian Church - Ontario, CA
April 19, 2020
Year A - Second Sunday of Easter
John 20:19-31

John's story of so-called "Doubting Thomas" is one that really sticks prominently for me when I think back on my childhood church experiences. Maybe this has all been exaggerated by decades of wear and tear but I remember hearing over and over again what an awful disciple Thomas must have been for doubting the other disciples' word that they had encountered the risen living Christ. I had a feeling that the preacher was looking directly at me as if to say: "Curtis, you aren't like Thomas are you? You would never have a doubt enter your little head."

Well, as the years have gone by and I've done a whole lot more researching and thinking, I have a very different perspective on Thomas. I think Jesus was vitally aware of how difficult it would be for those who had not personally seen Him after the Resurrection to believe.

Once that first generation of Christian disciples had passed on, the challenges were going to increase dramatically. When Jesus says to Thomas that he has believed because he has seen, but those who believe without having seen will be blessed, He wasn't chastising Thomas as much as He was encouraging all of the generations of Christians that would follow to believe in the miracle of the Resurrection.

Thomas is not a model of hopeless faithlessness. Thomas is a model for the challenge of belief for contemporary Christians. We weren't there. We didn't see it happen. We didn't even get to have Thomas' experience of verifying the Resurrection after the fact.

Doubt can be provoked by many things. I think that most of us who have been churchgoers from early in life have long since learned to reconcile what we know of science with

the miracles of the Gospel. One does not invalidate the other. So, I don't think that any perceived disconnect between science and religion is really the problem.

I think that our most profound and troubling moments of doubt are provoked by events in our own lives. Health problems. Marital issues. The death of a loved one. A serious financial reversal. Doubt can also be provoked by national and international events. Wars. Natural disasters. Famine. Pandemics.

When moments of doubt occur, don't hide from them. Acknowledge them. Confront them. Let your doubt be a catalyst for further reflection, further study. I have to think that Thomas' faith was that much stronger because he had passed through a time of doubt. Thomas said that he would need to see the risen Christ and put his fingers in the holes where Jesus had been nailed to the Cross. Jesus gave Thomas exactly what he had asked for.

In your moments of doubt, don't expect Jesus to show up and offer to let you touch His wounds. For most of us anyway, something that dramatic is just not likely to happen. But you will find affirmations of faith if you are patient. Seeing the smiles and laughter of my grandchildren when we FaceTime on our smartphones. Working daily with Kay to support each other and press forward. The amazing team work that now takes place every week between David Clemensen, Caroline Lopez, our editor Mike Mason and myself to get these virtual worship services to you (and I would be remiss if I did not point out that Kay is behind the camera right now making sure that my portion of the service is recorded properly).

This Easter season, especially *this* Easter season, we need to be alive to the miracles that are all around us. These miracles may seem minor in comparison with the Resurrection but they are deeply profound in their ability to show us the way to deeper faith.

Thank you, Doubting Thomas for your doubts. Thank you, Believing Thomas for showing us the way to faith restored and faith strengthened. Thank you, Westminster Presbyterian Church for your steadfast displays of love, devotion and courage. And thank you, God, for all of the life-giving and faith-sustaining miracles of this Easter season.