

April 7, 2024  
Second Sunday of Easter

“Despise Your Doubts”

John 20:19-31

Thomas’ conversion to faith was like flipping a light switch. Let’s get it right from the top—he should never be referred to as doubting Thomas. He doesn’t doubt. He says quite clearly, *“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”* Easter evening Thomas is an unbeliever, a denier of the resurrection, a rejecter of the risen Christ.

The following Sunday Jesus again appears with all the disciples present this time, and I think He kind of goads Thomas a little bit, mocking his unbelief. *“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”*

Boom! Thomas is a believer and rightly reacts with one of the simplest and greatest statements of faith in Holy Scripture, *“My Lord and my God!”* And I bet most Christians today covet his experience, because we really want that epiphany, that revelation, that confirmation before our own eyes that Jesus is indeed risen from the dead.

But then Jesus speaks those words that seem to indicate that believing by faith is better than believing by sight, *“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* So count yourself as blessed, because you believe by faith and not by sight. And because you are blessed, despise your doubts.

I say this because in our culture’s post-modern way of thinking and maybe especially in light of some of the “truths” our authorities and experts are foisting upon us these days that turn out to be not-so-true, we tend to think it a virtue to be skeptical and doubt. Quite frankly, I agree with that in most circumstances. Our main spiritual adversary, the devil, is the prince of lies so skepticism is a good thing.

But when it comes to Jesus, when it comes to His life, crucifixion and resurrection, doubt is not an acceptable position. Thomas is an example of the two states of faith—unbelief and belief. Which of these does doubt favor? The answer is obvious! This is why I urge you—despise your doubts!

Peter was walking on the water and then started sinking and Christ later asks him, *“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”* The proverb says, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”* St. James writes regarding prayer, *“The one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.”* Just read through the epistles—there is no doubt. Statements such as *“the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin”* leave no room for doubting the Savior and His work. Doubting Jesus is undoubtably a no no.

I preach on this not to chastise you for having doubts. Scripture itself admits that we fallen creatures will struggle in our faith. Jesus Himself is the perfecter of our faith. Jude exhorts believers to *“have mercy on those who doubt.”* My purpose is to encourage you to struggle against all doubt as it pertains to Christ.

Doubt, like many other spiritually unhealthy things, is something we can get comfortable with. Agnostics excel at this, doubting any concrete claim about God but thinking everything will work out in the end.

But we Christians are by no means immune. I’ve met more than one whose statement of faith is something like, *“If the Bible is right then I’m saved but if it isn’t I haven’t lost anything.”*

That's hedging your bets, not trusting Christ for salvation. Injecting an "if" or a "maybe" into Christ's resurrection is to open the door to other possibilities for the truth. When that door of doubt is opened you know exactly what is going to rush in—worldly, self-centered thinking.

Doubt allows you to place Jesus in a box somewhere in your life...just in case. It may be a very exalted place indeed, but maybe He isn't really in charge of things so I'd better rely on myself when it comes to the important stuff. If you doubt the competency of your doctor or financial advisor, what do you do? At the very least you get a second opinion. You might even ditch them altogether.

Likewise, if you doubt the resurrection of Christ which guarantees your resurrection from the dead...in what life then are you going to place your trust? This one! Yet Christians, plagued with doubt due to our fallen nature, tend to get comfortable living this type of double life—trusting Jesus on one side, but hedging our bets in chasing the fallen world on the other. And we can so easily explain it away as simply being saint and sinner, which is our reality here.

But this is toxic to faith! We must despise such doubts that open the door to trusting the world. Why? Because of the truth of right faith Thomas proclaims: "*My God and my Lord!*" This is a statement of full allegiance and trust, knowing Christ to be the highest authority through whom salvation is guaranteed. There is no doubt, only acceptance the one belongs to Christ.

"Maybe my God?" "If my Lord?" That doesn't call for allegiance. It calls for hedging one's bets. To get comfortable with such doubts is simply another sinful rationalization for making you the god and lord over your own life. Despise such doubts!

How? First off, don't follow the culture and make lofty excuses for your doubts as if you have the authority to judge the promises of God. I'm all for struggling with and debating the finer points of theology. But that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came, lived, died and rose again for your salvation is not at all in doubt. That He reigns as Lord—Lord over you and your life—is not in doubt. That He forgives your sins and that gift is received by faith in Him is not in doubt. Jesus is your Lord and your God...and you are not!

When those doubts come, don't let them stand! Take them to your merciful Lord and God. Plead for His help. Jesus ended a parable with these words, "*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" God wants to strengthen faith, to quiet those doubts. Running to Him in prayer in itself is an act of submission and trust which combats one's uncertainties and receives His blessing.

And turn to His word of promise. If you're struggling with some situation causing doubt see what He has to say about it. These days you can just Google, "What does the Bible say about whatever" and you'll have all sorts of references to ponder. Allow God's mighty works in the past, His love and mercy shown to you in Christ, His encouragements and admonitions of His apostles have their way with you and encourage you.

And if worse comes to worse I'd say just stop and take a look at yourself, your sins, your life. You make a lousy Lord and God. You break your promises. You fail in your limited power. Your joy does not endure. You cannot save your life. You depending on you, you depending on this life and world, are hopeless. You need the true Lord and Go—and you know He is always there for you?

So despise those doubts. Fight them by nourishing you mind on the truth of Christ crucified and risen. Hundreds of eyewitnesses proclaimed this salvation. By God's grace to you in the Holy Spirit it is not in doubt. It is the sacred reality of the baptized who are blessed because they have not seen, and yet, believe Christ is My God and My Lord.

Amen.