

‘A Word on Doubt’

Psalm 121; John 20:24-29

May 1, 2022

Doubting Thomas

- It was in my first church I got a taste of hard skepticism. It was the kind of case that would make rookie preacher sweat
 - o An 8-year-old named Bailey K.
 - o Bailey was a precocious little girl, the child of a teacher, she was always incredibly inquisitive.
 - o But she also wouldn't just take ANYTHING because you said so.
 - o One day, I was talking to the kids about God and Bailey interrupted the whole thing
 - Do you mean to tell me God has no parents?
 - Out of the blue
 - Yes, Bailey, God is non-created
 - Bailey – I'm not buying it.
 - She then went on to talk about exactly why that was impossible, using arguments that philosophers have used since Plotinus'/
 - o A hardened 8-year-old skeptic.
- But God bless our skeptics, they oftentimes make some of the greatest disciples of Christ
 - o They keep on wrestling with the big ideas and, in the contest, continue to grow in Christ.
- So, let's read a text about a man who doubted.

“²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin,^[d] was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “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.” ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Who was Thomas?

- **HAVE YOU EVER MADE ONE MISTAKE AND GOTTEN CHARACTERIZED BY IT?**
 - o I'm a pretty good talker so when the Russian teacher got a chance to cast her play for the entire foreign language department, I was high on her list.
 - o I froze
 - o Kids in that class remembered that for the entire year, some, joked with me about it into the class the next semester, continued.
- Thomas gets that name doubting because of one 8-day stretch.
- Didymas, the Twin
- HE isn't given much character development in the other Gospels but here in John, we learn quite a bit about him in a short period of time.
- First of all, we know he's a twin.
- He's called with the rest of the disciples and, in John's Gospel, he would've followed Jesus for about three years
 - o He'd have healed and taken part in miracles and seen water changed to wine, Lazarus emerge from the tomb.
- He ends up with a bad nickname, “Doubting”, when, in actuality, he's displayed amazing faith in Jesus Christ.
 - o John 11:14-16 - *“Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died,¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin,^[b] said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”*

- HE we see a more complete picture of Thomas, not one who doubts, but one who is totally committed to Jesus' message.
- So, what changes him?
 - Heartbreak.
 - Can you imagine investing so much into something that you're willing to lay down your life for it?
 - Then, to have its source gone, disappeared, vamoosed? Can you imagine the depression?
- We know Thomas isn't with the other disciples when Jesus first appears.
 - IT seems that he's given to brooding, perhaps depressed, he found solace being alone.
- The other disciples tell him what they've seen?
 - They've seen the Risen Lord and yet Thomas is steadfast,
 - Until I see what you've seen....
 - NOTE TO CHURCH.
 - Notice here, that the disciples and apostles stay in connection with Thomas. He isn't shunned or excluded for his lack of theological purity. He is instead around them nevertheless.
 - What if the church was better with doubters?
 - Could it be that we'd do a better job of reaching people?
 - If we said, bring us your doubts, we'll love you regardless?

All Thomas wants, is what we all want - to be assured that he isn't being deceived.

A surprising number of the great Christian minds didn't always start that way.

One, CS Lewis, began rather admittedly skeptical, an atheist really.

CS Lewis

- It'd be hard to find another writer more significant in faith development than CS Lewis.
- His popular book, "Mere Christianity" has affected millions to faith along with his other writings, fiction, the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.
- But CS Lewis was an English scholar and skeptical.
- But his friends kept working on him, finally, one night, as they walked and talked, the last of his objections to faith were overcome
 - He accepted Jesus Christ into his life and the rest, as they say, is history.
- Some of the greatest theologians from Augustine to Lewis all began, just like Bailey Kaylor, with great doubts.
- One of my most listened to theologians is a guy named Diogenes Allen.
 - One of the things he begins his book with, "Thoughts for a Troubled Mind." Is that he's a Christian because it makes the most sense to him?
 - The rest of the book is him going through, making sense of some of the deepest mysteries of the faith.

Thomas is given what he asks for

- Don't overlook this.
- IF you have doubts, are you asking Jesus for anything?
 - Sometimes we get to thinking that the only time we should pray or ask Jesus for anything is when we're like a pillar of faith.
 - Like, only then, are we good enough to be heard.
 - But that attitude overlooks so much of what it means to be in relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - It also overlooks the Book of the Psalms.

- In a great number of the Psalms, the writer begins by telling of their transgression, their doubt, their failures only to continue to beseech God for help with the certain knowledge that they help will come eventually.
 - If you get to a place of living entirely doubt free, enjoy it.
- As Fredrick Buecher once said, doubt is the ants in the pants of faith which keeps it moving, active, and alive.

What to do if doubt overtakes you.

- I. Seek out Jesus in Prayer and Worship
 - a. The best place to take those kinds of concerns and feelings are directly to Jesus.
 - b. That's why when doubt arises, you're best served being in close contact with the Savior.
- II. Read the Scriptures
 - a. There is no surer way to interact with the Holy Spirit than by sitting and reading Scripture
 - b. In those blessed Word, we find comfort AND THE answers to those deep questions which confront our faith from time to time.
- III. Get into Service
 - a. See how people's lives are coming alive in Jesus Christ
 - b. Mother Tereasa story
 - i. Many doubts
 - ii. Kept persevering kept receiving faith to go on.

Conclude with Bailey Kaylor

- She had doubts, but when she got older, she was always a great VBS helper.
- Bailey had doubts but she had the faith to articulate them and keep in dialogue.
- You may never get the answers you seek, you might but, if you don't, don't think you can't be an effective witness to Christ.