

“Have You Doubted?”
Exodus 3:1-12 & John 20:19-31

What a glorious day, Jesus has risen! We are past the stressors’ that led up to Easter Sunday. Although we have to understand what Jesus suffered to fully understand what his death means to us, and to understand that to be followers of Jesus we will sometimes need to have courage to face and challenge the injustices in our world.

From the readings today we can see that we come from a long line of faithful people, but that we are prone to be doubters, we’re inclined to disbelieve, distrust, and to be suspicious of things.

Can you imagine how Moses was feeling when an angel spoke to him from a burning bush? It was burning but was not being consumed. His disbelief led him to want to inspect this bush more closely, but when he tried to look at it, God called to him and told him to go no closer. Can you imagine how he may have been feeling? I know I would have been petrified. The voice tells Moses that it is the God of his father, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Then God tells Moses that he is being sent to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses doubts his ability to do this but he is told that God will be with him. Moses was being asked to follow something that was strange and unknown to him. Speaking to God , even way back then, wasn’t a normal occurrence.

In today’s Gospel reading we hear that the disciples were hiding behind locked doors when Jesus miraculously appeared before them. Showing His hands and saying “Peace be with you”, so they would know it was really Jesus. In this passage we also hear of Thomas who doubted the disciples account of Jesus’ first visit to them. Thomas said, that unless he saw and was able to put his fingers and hand in the wounds, he wouldn’t believe it was Jesus. I believe, just this bit of the

story has left Thomas unfairly marked as “Doubting Thomas”. I am left asking why was only Thomas centered out as a doubter. Hadn’t Peter doubted the story of the women who informed the disciples that the tomb was empty, that Jesus had risen. Peter seemed to need to see before he would believe, so he doubted the women. In today’s reading Peter and the other disciples had the benefit of Jesus just appearing before them, and showing them the nail marks in His hands and the hole in his side. Would they have believed if they hadn’t seen? What makes Thomas any different, is it that he voiced his doubt?

Then we hear in the Gospel reading that Thomas’ doubted what the other disciples told him. After Jesus is crucified, his body disappears from the tomb and people begin to claim seeing him. Others tell Thomas of seeing Jesus but he did not believe them because he had not seen Jesus and his wounds for himself. Thomas got his chance to see the proof. With all the doors locked, POOF, Jesus shows up and gives Thomas the chance to prove for himself Jesus is truly Jesus. Once more we are told of a mystical appearance. This in itself would freak me out, let alone having Jesus and his wounds standing there. I ask you; would you not doubt? Would you be able to believe what others told you or would you need the proof? Jesus tells Thomas, and this is a message to all of us as well; “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe”. Do you believe without having seen?

We have all had doubts about something in our lives or about something we’ve heard, and probably will many times more in the future. Have you ever doubted your faith beliefs? Don’t worry if you have, others have too, myself included. I was Religiously and faith challenged growing up. My Great Grandmother was Mohawk, so my Grandfather and Dad taught us traditional ways, and my Mom was High Anglican. Through my confusion I perceived faith and religion to be the same thing.

I didn't want religion because I saw how it was being used against people and so I pushed my faith beliefs away as well as institutionalized religion. When Rev. Bob Gay asked me to work with him, in 1987, in the Downtown Chaplaincy, I made it very clear that I Was Not Religious!

It wasn't until I was in a Catholic community in Northern Ireland, in 1992 at the height of the violence, that I saw the messages in this book being lived out. These were truly faithful people of God, living through violence and oppression, but never losing their faith in God or their community. This is when I experienced a powerful spiritual reawakening. I know I have always believed in a higher power, no matter what we call it, and I have always believed in Jesus, but due to some bad experiences I doubted the messages in the Bible because I did not see them lived out in my Community. Once I returned to Canada, I went on a quest to find the faith community I would feel comfortable being part of. I learned all faiths have their faults, but the United Church came the closest to what I believe, and that would feed me spiritually.

I have also come to realize that my faith has to be an active one, one I have to live into. If I want that world of justice and peace, I have to play an active role in making it happen, just as I witnessed in Northern Ireland. Jesus didn't wait for someone else to do it. Neither should we.

Do you doubt you have the ability to follow the examples of what we should do for others? Remember, Jesus and his disciples, challenged systems. That can be pretty scary. Why do you think the disciples were behind locked doors when Jesus appeared before them? They were scared of attack by the authorities. Here's a spoiler alert, in the next Book of Acts, the disciples were brought up before the High Priests and elders, put in jail, and flogged for preaching in the name of Jesus. After all they went through, they still preached in the name of Jesus. It's not easy to be a follower of Jesus. But as Christians that is what we are called to do. I know

each and every time I speak before you, I try calling you into action to address poverty issues in our community, beyond the charitable approach. Don't get me wrong, we need charity to take care of the immediate needs of people living in poverty and on our cold streets, but we also need to do systemic advocacy to make long term changes in systems and the lives of people, so that poverty, hunger, and cold street living no longer exists. To help make us a stronger and healthier community, I am going to ask you to join me and others who are already doing the systemic advocacy work, that is so needed to make real difference in all of our lives, and especially those living in poverty and oppression. So Please come and join me, and others in creating God's "Heaven on Earth".

We know from the Biblical Stories, and for some, the movie "The ten Commandments" that Moses didn't do great works without help. It was with the help of God and his brother Aaron that Moses was able to make the Pharaoh let his people go from Egypt. God was with him. God is always with us, and I truly believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the man who showed us how we are to live into God's vision of a world of justice and peace. Yes, we are the doubting children of God, but know that God will have patience with us, as was shown to Moses, and as Jesus did with Thomas. Jesus has shown us through his ministry, how we are to be with one another and the world. We are the children of God and the followers of Jesus, so let's go out and in the company of others make a Real Difference In This world!

Now let all God's children say Amen.