

Acts 2:14a,22-32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31

In my opinion, poor Thomas gets a bad rap in today's gospel reading. If you are of a certain age you have probably referred to someone who voices skepticism as a "doubting Thomas" as if he was the only one who had a difficult time believing in this resurrection thing.

In last week's reading Mary arrives at the tomb and finds the stone rolled away. When she shares this startling information with Peter and the beloved disciple they rush to the empty tomb. Could that be because they needed to see for themselves? Later, perhaps thinking she will see something different this time, Mary again enters the tomb where she discovers two angels. Then she sees a man she presumes to be a gardener. As soon as he calls her name, she recognizes him as Jesus. She leaves and tells the disciples "I have seen the Lord."

To me, what is most interesting - is what the story fails to tell us. There is no account of the reaction of the male disciples. When we pick up today's story it is evening of that very day and the disciples are hiding behind locked doors. Jesus appears to them, and shows them his hands and his side. At that point, and presumably not before, the disciples rejoice.

Thomas was absent for all of this and after his friends share their news his reaction is one most of us can relate to. He wants proof. While the author does not say so, isn't it likely Mary and the other disciples experienced doubts as well? Clearly Mary did not assume that the man standing at the tomb was Jesus, and just try to imagine how afraid and confused the disciples must have been when they believed themselves safely locked in a house and suddenly a man appears before them who turns out to be Jesus!

The Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis, from Middle Collegiate Church recently stated in a podcast that "It is human to lose faith. And it is human to find it again."¹ I believe that is precisely what happened with Mary, and Thomas and all the disciples. Their teacher, their leader, this man who they believed was going to change the world was brutally beaten, crucified and died before their eyes, well at least those brave enough to stay to watch. They believed the future they envisioned perished with their Messiah.

While none of us were there, I imagine we can all call to mind a time in our own life when we experienced tremendous upheaval. When our world was turned upside down. When we felt lost and unconsolable.

Last week was the most unusual Holy Week I have ever experienced. Instead of dyeing eggs and sharing ham dinner with my family I was practicing social distancing as we “Zoomed” from our respective homes. Rather than partaking in some of the most poignant and beautiful worship the church offers, I was watching services on my computer, or creating them to be live-streamed. In place of consuming the bread and wine, I was receiving them spiritually.

The Covid-19 virus is devastating. While I recognize that for me personally, its effects are, at the moment, merely inconveniences, I am deeply saddened, yet immensely grateful for the people who must go to work every day, potentially exposing themselves to the virus. I am broken hearted for the thousands of people who have died in isolation, or with only a kind stranger to hold their hand. I am worried that my loved ones who are essential workers might catch the virus and what that could mean for them. I despair for the multitude of people who live pay check to pay check and have now lost even that income. I am fearful of the countless ripple effects of this pandemic we do not yet see coming.

However, in spite of this myriad of emotions, I take comfort in knowing we are an Easter people. To paraphrase Paul, that means nothing will keep us from the Love of God. Not Mary’s inability to recognize him at the tomb, nor Thomas’ doubts and demands of proof, not even locked doors were able to keep Jesus away. The promise of Easter is that Jesus came and changed the world.

As Easter people we believe in the risen Lord. And we follow The Way of Love.

The Way of Love does not eliminate uncertainty or fears. It does not guarantee we will never stumble or fall. The Way of Love gives us hope. Hope that Jesus is walking with us.

The Way of Love recognizes we are broken, our world is fragmented, we are sinners even as we attempt to be disciples of Christ. It reminds us that Jesus died for us and that Love overcame even death.

In his book [A Bigger Table Building Messy, Authentic, and Hopeful Spiritual Community](#) Pastor John Pavlovitz writes “God is more than big enough to withstand the weight of your vacillating belief, your part-time skepticism, and even your full-blown faith crises.”²

The Love of Jesus broke through at Easter for the disciples and it continues to do so for us. Love breaks through when we call a neighbor to check on them, or we wear a mask when we go to the grocery store. Love breaks through when we contribute to our local food pantry. Love breaks through when we take the time to educate ourselves about white privilege and we lament our contributions, known and unknown to institutional racism.

As we walk forward together may the Love of the resurrected Christ calm our fears, prevail over our doubts and infuse us with courage to see the face of God in every living creature. Amen.

¹ Rev. Dr. Jacquie Lewis on Brian Lehrer Show Podcast, April 9, 2020 “Together Separately for Easter” <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/together-separately-for-easter/id73331636?i=1000471008408>

² A Bigger Table Building Messy, Authentic, and Hopeful Spiritual Community by Rev. John Pavlovitz p 54