



SEASON OF EASTER

Dealing with Doubts and Fears

By Rev. Rohan Forrester
Chair of CIRMC

There is a **CERTAINTY OF POWER & PURPOSE** about the narrative in the Gospel of John 20: 19-31. (Please read this text quietly to yourself)

(The **POWER** of that event is tied up in the person of that event – Jesus. It was his obedience that brought about the event. The **PURPOSE** is that we may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God).



But this certainty of power and purpose are often undermined and challenged by **DOUBTS** and **FEARS**. Doubts and fears are

what sometimes keep people out of the Church. Doubts and fears test our faith. Doubts and fears can also make faith stronger.

In an unrelated text (1Corinthians 15), the Apostle Paul made a profound case for the resurrection of Jesus: Paul made the following emphatic points about the importance and significance of the resurrection:

- a) If there is no such thing as resurrection of the dead then Jesus Christ has not been raised [15:13,15,16].
- b) If Christ has not been raised the gospel is useless [15:14].
- c) If Christ has not been raised Christian faith is useless and futile [15:14,17].
- d) If Christ has not been raised the Apostles had misrepresented God when they taught that God raised Christ from the dead [15:15].
- e) If Christ has not been raised then Christians are still unforgiven [15:17].
- f) If Christ has not been raised those who died trusting Him, are lost [15:18].

h) If Christ has not been raised the commitment of the Apostles to preach the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection, in the face of persecution and threat of death, is absurd [15:30-32a].

i) If Christ has not been raised then the rational thing to do is to abandon God and faith [15:32b].

So, there is sufficient evidence to dispel **DOUBTS** and **FEARS**, yet we sometimes have doubt and are fearful. The truth is, no one has all the facts, and no one knows what tomorrow brings.

Is it alright to doubt the resurrection? The answer is found in our text in John 20: 19-31. In the text we read about the resurrection account of Jesus and how the Disciples responded.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is central to our Christian faith. It shows that Christianity is not a religion based on abstract principles but a relationship with a living Saviour, whom we can know, who offers life and empowers us and transforms us into Disciples of **HOPE** and not **DOUBTS** and **FEARS**.

Within this narrative we also notice the inclusion of Thomas' response to the testimony of the other Disciples as an important part of the resurrection story. His reaction reminds us of our own human experiences. We all grapple with doubts and fears, anxiety, and despair, especially amidst the present pandemic.



The Thomas account speaks to an old saying... 'SEEING IS BELIEVING' that gives the perfect excuse of all absentees to the Resurrection and also names that part of each of us that, when faced with the mystery of the Resurrection, might want to say, "Show me!"

In our text, we read that the Disciples were on lockdown –they were behind locked doors, where they met in secrecy. Their hearts were filled with confusion, disappointment, doubt and fear among other things. They might have also felt emotionally drained:

- could it be that they felt powerless, unable to save Jesus?
- could it be that they were ashamed that one of their own had denied Jesus?
- could it be that they were ashamed that they abandoned Jesus in His time of great need?

- could it be that they were questioning their faith and saying to themselves that they did not believe in Jesus enough to feel assured of His resurrection?

It was amidst all that they were feeling and what they feared the authorities might do next, that Jesus made a surprise appearance and revelation. Amidst everything, Jesus stood among them and gave them his peace. There He was, moving, talking, inviting them to touch him. He showed them His hands, feet and side. The scars of our REDEMPTION and HOPE.



All this time, Thomas was absent. He was the only one of the Disciples who was not hiding in the Upper Room, afraid that those who killed Jesus would come after them. Thomas was the only one bold enough to venture out into the streets of Jerusalem.

Later, when he joined the rest of the Disciples and heard of Jesus' resurrection he found it hard to believe. At the testimony of the others, he exclaimed, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of those nails, and my hand in His side, I will not believe."

According to verse 26, it was not until eight days later that Jesus again appeared to the Disciples, when Thomas met Him face to face and exclaimed "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas is very much like some of us wanting to believe and still unsure that Jesus has actually risen. Clearly, Thomas like all of us needs evidence of our faith. (John 20:30-31) Thomas wanted to see the scars and touch them to ensure that it was really true. The eyewitness reports of the other Disciples were not enough. Thomas needed to SEE for himself that the dead Jesus was now the alive Jesus.

You and I can relate to the urging of Thomas who insisted on seeing something with his own eyes before he decided it is real. It is time to let Thomas be our guide. To not be afraid to ask questions or seek evidence, yet also to not be afraid to accept the reality of the resurrection. The disbelief and the doubting for Thomas was not something that was rooted in facts.

We must be like 'Thomas' who doubted one of history's greatest mysteries, to deepen his faith and provide us with the tools we need to move to a more purposeful life and a closer relationship with God.

We must be like 'Thomas' to see with open-eyed faith the confirmation of Jesus' life and the revelation that He is our Lord and our God.

We must be like 'Thomas' who questions life, especially its major events or problems, is not a bad thing.

Indeed, we can learn a valuable lesson from Thomas: We must doubt and then move beyond doubt to faith. It is all right to doubt, but we must move beyond doubt.

I must admit that there is a place life for honest doubt. We must therefore place our doubt at the feet of Jesus in the same way we bring to Him along with our gifts of bread and wine and money.

This is our HOPE that Jesus' scars remind us of. Jesus' scars carried the marks that took His life, the marks that give us life, the marks which verified that He was crucified, the marks that He had died and the marks to be hopeful.

THE TRUTH IS: There is a story behind every scar. Some of the stories are painful; others are funny. Some are significant, while others are insignificant. Some are filled with shame, while others are full of pride. Yet without exception, every scar serves as a visible reminder of wounds we have incurred. scars from chickenpox, falling from a tree, falling while running or walking as a child or adult, burns, surgeries . . . not to mention emotional scars.

However, the scars of Jesus tell a different story. They serve as visible signs of HOPE that removes doubt and fear. Jesus bears the "Scars of Hope." This is symbolized by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus felt deep pain, and through His resulting scars and resurrection, we can be HOPEFUL. We are able to have HOPE beyond the grave. HOPE beyond despair. HOPE beyond the novel Coronavirus – COVID-19.

Consider

1. Jesus shows up where we are – these days in our homes
2. Jesus gives us peace
3. Jesus removes our doubts and fears
4. Jesus gives proof that we may believe

Jesus dispelled the doubt of Thomas and the fears of the others by showing and giving them His hands, His nail-scarred hands. He showed them that He was alive and real, and, therefore, sins are forgiven:

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

April 19. (Sunday) 2nd Sunday of Easter
Local United Church Worship Services will be distributed via video links.

Worship the Lord
 -on Radio Cayman 89.9 every Sunday at 7:45 am-
April 19. Rev. Rohan Forrester

Published by the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
 292 Prospect Point Road
 P.O. Box 1700 Grand Cayman KY1-1109 CAYMAN ISLANDS
 Tel: 1 345 947 1963 Email: rdgs@cicucjci.com or cirmcinfo@gmail.com
 Website: unitedchurch.org.ky