

Doubt Reframed by Faith!

1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 20: 19-31

Sometimes when I hear this story of Thomas, I want to rail against him. How can you not believe eleven people Thomas? Well, I guess it would have been 10 as Judas had left the group by then, but that collective voice: “this really happened,” and all the other followers that would have chimed in; and Thomas says, “no I don't believe you.” Then there are the other times, when I say, “Way to go Thomas. Do not go with the crowd. Do not believe what everyone else is saying.”

Where are you today in your faith journey? Are you in a place where you can say to Thomas, “how can you not believe Thomas? Your elders, friends, those you respect are saying this is truly happening.” Or are you having a day where you are feeling more empathy with Thomas: Way to go Thomas, there is a lot more evidence that is needed before we can believe this incredible, impossible news of the resurrection. How can we believe that Jesus, who lived an amazing life and died a horrific death, could be among us again.

Christian faith is sometimes like that. The fact that others say that it is true and safe and peaceful within the faith, cannot always convince us it is true. And other times, when people say Christianity can bring you peace and relief from your troubles, we can believe them. This is a normal human response to incredible news: to believe it fully and doubt it completely. This is why Christians feel comfortable with ideas like the Trinity. Of course, there could be one in three and three in one. We can believe it completely and doubt it completely. This is why when Christianity says you are forgiven all your sins and you should try to strive to live well. Even though your sins will be forgiven, you should still strive to keep your life focused on God, love, peace, and justice. Christians say, ‘Yep those can both be true.’ Sometimes it feels like a pendulum and we are swinging back and forth. Other times we just sit in the paradox knowing that Jesus has died and yet we can feel his hand on our shoulder.

How is it going for your faith today? Is it feeling imperishable? Or is it feeling a little doubtful? Either way I hope it is good news for you to hear that Jesus will still come over to your house whether you are a Thomas, or a Peter, a Mary or a Martha - Jesus is willing to show up.

I was thinking a lot about “reframing” over the last little while. It is a metaphorical concept used now in psychology to describe that we can choose what framework to put around what we're experiencing. Now just like most metaphors, it doesn't always work that way. I can *choose* a frame

but sometimes that frame falls apart. Sometimes it feels weak and like it can't contain all the reality around me. Our hope though that no matter what we are experiencing, we can occasionally have the strength to frame it in our faith.

And so, I want you to imagine a frame for this time. *Underneath all* of what you are experiencing, is the **faith** that your soul is being kept safe, protected, eternal and loved. No matter how you are feeling, what you are thinking, if you are ill or well: the ground of your being is still holding you. For the sides of your frame, I pray that hope is on one side of all you experience, one side of your frame. I hope that love is on the other.

I hope that occasionally, even the darkest days, you can *lean* on **hope**. Please lean into the fact that you are resilient, that you are part of a resilient community and together, and that you can lean on one another. Most of us in our lifetime have not experienced something so global as a pandemic, but we have all met up against something bigger than us. What are some things that brought hope to you in that time? Who are some people who brought you hope in that time? What nuggets of wisdom, what stories, what faith filled hope brought you to today?

On the other side (of your frame), I pray that you've experienced a touch of love in the last little while. Whether it be a glimpse of someone on a Zoom meeting, a phone call or letter. Perhaps you sat one day and read, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want," (Psalm 23) and the love of God and your community became tangible again. *Lean* into that **love**.

As I've been exploring the book of Revelation, I've been doing so with a pastor accompanying me. His name is Eugene Peterson and he wrote a book about how all the good and all the bad, - everything within creation- is held in the Alpha and the Omega of God. And that all things are held in a place where God and Christ are at the centre and where the Spirit brings everything to completion. For me, that is my *overarching frame above*, is to know that somehow though I shall not know until I get to heaven, this time has **meaning, learning, purpose** for us - as individuals and as a community.

A frame is important for in this time there are things we are learning - and they aren't all pretty. More people of colour are dying of this Covid disease than people who are pale skinned and it has nothing to do with our genetics. The virus is an equal opportunity virus, but healing and health and protection are not doled out equally in most cultures and societies. What meaning, what learning are we being challenged to make in this time?

Perhaps you never thought about your faith (worship, spiritual formation, prayer) having a home, in your home. Was worship something you left for church, Sundays and some Wednesday nights? What does it mean for you to need a home altar at this time? A place of prayer and confession, of joy and hope, is needed in your every moment of life and not just on Sundays. Is there a meaning in this time for you about grounding your faith in the everyday? How is God overarching love made known for us as a world, as a country, as people of Christ?

We are going to pray a hymn next written by Francis of Assisi and it is one that helps me when my frame gets too small because it asks this of God; it asks God to help us.

Help me oh God, so that when I need consolation, I console others. Help me so that when I am seeking and struggling to make someone understand me, help me instead to seek to understand another.

Whenever I see despair, oh God, help me to not bring more despair, but to bring hope and space for all of your gifts of emotions, thoughts. Whenever I seek, oh God, to be forgiven, to be pardoned for the times and places this week when I have been greedy, self centered, doubting...that all of that be placed to the side so that I may go out and remind others that they are forgiven, that all are forgiven and freed.

In the prayer of Saint Francis, my frame is always stretched and widened. As we sing and pray this morning, framed by faith, hope and love, I wonder where do you seek to be consoled, and where in the world will you console others in the coming days. Let us sing.