



Apr. 23, 2017 Jn. 20:19-31 & Acts 2:42-47

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other Beck

Stone, Naomi. [Our Greatest Surrender](#)

Rolheiser, Fr Ron. [Faith, Doubt](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[U tube link](#) (Explore other links while there)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Shut up in a room, scared, feeling miserable, the disciples experience Jesus' presence in their midst. Fear turns to joy, which is quickly evolves to being charged with a mission. The mission is to forgive as they have been forgiven. This may be one of the most defining characteristics of being a follower of Jesus; the ability to receive forgiveness and then to be able to forgive. This was Jesus prayer on the cross, and his gift to each of us who believe in the Resurrection. Then there is this story: A sick man turned to his doctor, as he was preparing to leave the examination room and said, "Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side." Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know." "You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?" The doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side of which came a sound of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and

leaped on him with an eager show of gladness. Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing...I know my Master is there and that is enough. (Email story)

John 20:19-31

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for **fear** of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**" 20 After he said this, he **showed** them his hands and side. The disciples were **overjoyed** when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "**Peace be with you!** As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he **breathed** on them and said, "Receive the **Holy Spirit**. 23 If you **forgive** anyone his sins, they are **forgiven**; if you do not **forgive** them, they are not **forgiven**."

24 Now **Thomas** (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "**Unless** I see the **nail** marks in his hands and put my finger where the **nails** were, and put my hand into his side, I will not **believe** it." 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and **Thomas** was with them. Though 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; see my hands. **Reach** out your hand and put it into my side. Stop **doubting** and **believe**." 28 **Thomas** said to him, "**My Lord and my God!**" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have **believed**; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have **believed**." 30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by **believing** you may have **life** in his name.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Thomas refused to believe unless he could experience Jesus for himself. Have you ever been "Jesus" for someone who was struggling to believe?

PRAYER: Lord of the unexpected, I like Thomas need to see and touch you for myself in order to believe. I live in a world that has failed to live up to my hopes too long to be convinced easily. And I sure can't come to believe by way of someone else's faith. But because of someone else who has been YOU for me, I like Thomas will give it another try. Help me as I risk again and again, for as many tries as it takes to come to my own "**My Lord and my God!**" Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

FEAR: It appears that there are two basic sources of energy in the world. They are love and fear. When we are acting out of love, we can stand and even welcome light. When we are acting out of fear, we seem to prefer darkness. One of the things Jesus said most often was, "Do not be afraid".

If I had been one of the disciples that day, what feelings might I have had when Jesus appeared? Might it have been fear? Love? A combination of the two?

PEACE BE WITH YOU: Peace is that condition of wholeness, contentment, and fulfillment. It is when everything is just as God intends it to be.

Jesus wanted his presence to be a source of peace. How is Jesus' presence a source of peace for me?

SHOWED: To have something shown to us is to let us in on its reality.

How is Jesus letting the disciples in on his new reality? How has Jesus let me in on his reality this Easter?

OVERJOYED: To be overjoyed is to be so full of joy that you are running over with emotion.

When was the last time I was crying tears of joy because my feelings were running over?

BREATHED: In Genesis, God breathes on the new creation, and humanity came into being. John's gospel wants us to connect this event with a new creation.

How has Easter and its promise of your resurrection recreated me this year??

HOLY SPIRIT: In the Hebrew Scriptures there was a concept of the holiness of God's spirit, but until Pentecost, the people would not have experienced it personally.

If I were to try to talk about God's spirit in my life with a friend, what images would I use?

FORGIVE / FORGIVEN: God's love enables us to recognize a need, and then ask for the gift. To forgive is to give before you are asked.

What needs have I recognized in my life that needs God's forgiveness?

THOMAS: Thomas (called the twin) because he feels like our own twin at times, was hurt so deeply that he was not going to let himself be hurt like that again.

Are there any hurts in my life that I have vowed to protect myself against like Thomas?

REACH: In the original language we see the word, *halo*, which means thrust. Jesus is willing and able to have Thomas do whatever is needed to overcome his resistance.

What do I need to "thrust" myself into in order to overcome my resistance to being hurt again?

UNLESS: We use the word unless, when we are hesitant or fearful.

Is there anything about the Resurrection that causes me hesitation or fear?

NAIL/S: It appears that the wounds of life go into eternity with us as proof of our having overcome suffering and pain.

What 'nail' marks will go with me into eternity? Can I see them of proof of having suffered but not giving in to despair? Can I imagine them as badges of honor and love?

LOCKED: The people in that room that morning were locked in their doubts and fears.

Is there anything that causes me to lock out someone or something because of doubts or fears? Can the Resurrection help me to open the door and step out into freedom?

DOUBTING: It is said that doubt is faith's shadow. There must be a source of light to cast a shadow.

How has this Easter helped to cast light on my doubts?

BELIEVE / BELIEVED: To believe is to accept something as true.

Has there been anything in my life since last year that has helped me to deepen my belief?

MY LORD AND MY GOD: Thomas goes from doubting/fearing, to proclaiming Jesus Lord and God. He is an all or nothing kind of guy.

Do I have any feelings of being Thomas' twin? How can his witness help me as you encounter the challenges of my life?

LIFE: To have life is to be able to experience and reflect on this experience

Does John's gospel speak to my heart and help me to live more fully and lovingly?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 20:19 // Jn. 14:27; Jn. 20: 21 // Jn. 17:18; Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47f; Jn. 20:23 // Mt. 10: 19; 18:18; Jn. 20: 25 // 1 Jn. 1:1; Jn. 20: 26 // Jn. 21:14; Jn. 20: 29 // Jn. 4:48; Lk. 1:45; Jn. 20: 31 // 1 Jn. 5:13; Hos. 6:2;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 2: 42-47; [Ps. 16](#); 1 Pt. 3-9; Jn. 20: 19-31; Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:14b, 22-32; [Ps. 16](#); 1 Pt.1:17-23; Jn. 20:19-31;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

If a person says that he met God with total certainty and is not touched by a margin of uncertainty, then this is not good. For me, this is an important key. If one has the answers to all the questions—that is the proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself." Pope Francis

Doubt, therefore, need not always strike us as an enemy, as a spiritual cancer. Doubt is like a space beyond the reach of a light. The area gets darker not because of something bad, not because there is nothing in the space, but rather because the light -- in this case, the light of the human intellect -- has reached its limit. It is God's grace, then, our divine light, which takes over. [Matt Emerson](#)

For every gain in deep certitude there is a corresponding growth of superficial "doubt." This doubt is by no means opposed to genuine faith, but it mercilessly examines and questions the spurious "faith" of everyday life, the human faith which is nothing but the passive acceptance of conventional opinion. Thomas Merton

When we are not sure, we are alive. —Graham Greene

You cannot believe in God unless you are capable of questioning the authority of prejudice, even though that prejudice may seem to be religious. Faith is not blind conformity to a prejudice - a "pre-judgment." It is a decision, a judgment that fully and deliberately takes in the light of a truth that cannot be proven. You cannot be a man of faith unless you know how to doubt.

Thomas Merton. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. (New York: New Directions Books): 105

A person may be haunted with doubts, and only grow thereby in faith. Doubts are the messengers of the Living One to rouse the honest. They are the first knock at our door of things that are not yet, but have to be, understood... Doubt must precede every deeper assurance; for uncertainties are what we first see when we look into a region hitherto unknown, unexplored, un-annexed.

George MacDonald (1824-1905), "The Voice of Job"

Doubt is the one thing that helps keep faith from becoming fanaticism.

My own peculiar task in my Church and in my world has been that of the solitary explorer who, instead of jumping on all the latest bandwagons at once, is bound to search the existential depths of faith in its silence, its ambiguities, and in those certainties which lie deeper than the bottom of anxiety. In these depths there are no easy answers, no pat solutions to anything. It is a kind of submarine life in which faith sometimes mysteriously takes on the aspect of doubt when, in fact, one has to doubt and reject conventional and superstitious surrogates that have taken the place of faith. On this level, the division between Believer and Unbeliever ceases to be so crystal clear. It is not that some are all right and others are all wrong: all are bound to seek in honest perplexity. Everybody is an Unbeliever more or less! Only when this fact is fully experienced, accepted and lived with, does one become fit to hear the simple message of the Gospel-or any other religious teaching. 213-214.

A faith that is afraid of other people is no faith at all. A faith that supports itself by condemning others is itself condemned by the Gospel. 214

Thomas Merton. "Apologies to an Unbeliever" in *Faith and Violence*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968:

Even devout believers sometimes experience s-doubt. "Doubting Thomas," Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, and C. S. Lewis from the Christian tradition and Vivekananda from the Hindu tradition all entertained serious s-doubts (skeptics doubts) before becoming profoundly religious. Though some religious people have held that r-faith (religious faith) whose validity is logically demonstrated is not true religious faith, others, especially religious thinkers who have been touched by science, tend to argue that, at least at some stage, s-doubt is a necessary precondition for faith. Thus, Michael Corey says that "God might actually prefer the critical-thinking agnostic, who eventually comes to Him through a hard-won battle of conflicting beliefs, to the mindless subservient 'believer' who hasn't even bothered to examine his or her belief structure" (Corey 1993, 289). One may wonder how this author and others seem to know about God's preferences, but the point is that honest s-doubt is not incompatible with religious seeking.

Raman, Varadaraja V. *Faith and Doubt in Science and Religion*. *Zygon*. 12/2004 Pgs. 948-9.

How many people are there in the world of today who have "lost their faith" along with the vain hopes and illusions of their childhood? What they called "faith" was just one among all the other illusions. They placed all their hope in a certain sense of spiritual peace, of comfort, of interior equilibrium, of self-respect. Then when they began to struggle with the real difficulties and burdens of mature life, when they became aware of their own weakness, they lost their peace, they let go of their precious self-respect, and it became impossible for them to "believe." That is to say it became impossible for them to comfort themselves, to reassure themselves, with the images and concepts they found reassuring in childhood.

Place no hope in the feeling of assurance, of spiritual comfort. You may well have to get along without this. Place no hope in the inspirational preachers of Christian sunshine, who are able to pick you up and set you back on your feet and make you feel good for three or four days-until you fold up and collapse into despair. 187.

Thomas Merton. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. (New York, New York: New Directions, 1961

"When I had drunk the spirit from Heaven, and the second birth had restored me so as to make me a new person, then immediately in a marvelous manner doubts began to be resolved, closed doors to be opened, dark places to be light; what before was difficult now seemed easy." - St. Cyprian

All proofs or demonstrations by important atheists may be enough to make the existence of God questionable, but they are not enough to put the nonexistence of God beyond question Pg. 48
Kung, Hans. *The Beginning of All Things: Science & Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 2007.

But the Divine Being is not a being beside others. It is the power of being conquering non-being. It is eternity conquering temporality. It is grace conquering sin. It is ultimate reality conquering doubt. Paul Tillich – *Theology of Culture*

Often, confusion is the tension of trying to make sense of things too soon....let the opposing voices in your head speak. They are only finding their part in a larger, yet-to-be heard song. p-64
Nepo, Mark. *The Book of Awakening*. Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000.

[Gospel according to the Hebrews](#) (in Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 2 on James, the Lord's brother) - Also the gospel called according to the Hebrews, lately translated by me into Greek and Latin, which Origen often uses, tells, after the resurrection of the Savior: "Now the Lord, when he had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, went to James and appeared to him (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him rising again from among them that sleep)"; and a little further on the Lord says, "Bring a table and bread" and immediately it is added, "He took bread and blessed and broke and gave it to James the Just and said to him: 'My brother, eat your bread, for the son of man is risen from among them that sleep.'"

Faith does not remove the marks of suffering, but it can transform their meaning. It is sobering and valuable to remember that resurrection does not erase the wounds of crucifixion. Mary T. Stimming

Ignatius, [Epistle to the Smyrneans](#) 3:2 - And when he came to those with Peter, he said to them, "Take, handle me, and see that I am not a bodiless ghost."

C. S. Lewis talks about how patient Christ is with those who have seen the truth that he is Lord and God, but who do not want to give in. When all the defensive arguments that he put forward were demolished, he buried himself in work to avoid a confrontation with Christ. He wrote in his autobiography "Surprised by Joy: "Night after night, whenever I lifted my mind from work, I was aware of the steady, unrelenting approach of Him, whom I earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had come upon me. I gave in, and admitted God was God, and knelt and prayed. Perhaps that night the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is not the most shining and obvious thing...the divine humility which will accept a convert on such terms...that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful."

Faith begins with recognition that there exists uncertainty of any knowledge. Deciding that something is true always involves a certain level of uncertainty. ...Steven L. Peck

Faith's problem, however, is not that God is so far from us as to be unknowable, but so close to us as to go unrecognized.
Lewis, Alan E. *Between Cross and Resurrection*. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001. Page 23.

We are the most human when we are out of control, which is to say, when we are engrossed, engaged and enfolded in holy mystery." - Katherine McLaughlin, "Exploring Ambiguity"

It will happen that the words we need, will come of themselves. When the words we want to use shoot up of themselves – we get a new song. Eskimo hunter Orpingalik

Faith is the beginning of love; the end of love is knowledge of God. Abba Evagrius

The time is fast approaching when one will either be a mystic or an unbeliever. Karl Rahner

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 95-99. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2013. Pgs. 79-To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010. Pgs. 65-68. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007. Pgs. 86-88. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)