

2 Easter Year C

4/24/2022

Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 118:14-29; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31

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The second Sunday of Eastertide is always dedicated to the disciple named Thomas.

Often referred to as “Doubting Thomas”

An unfortunate nickname that has stuck with him through the centuries.

But he was actually a bold disciple...

Full of faith...

Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in the first century as far away as India.

Our Gospel narrative includes both a low moment and a high moment for Thomas.

He wasn't with the other disciples when Jesus first showed up with them after his resurrection.

He confessed that he wouldn't believe in the resurrection unless he saw Jesus himself...

and not just see him...

but touch him...

make sure he was really there.

A week later when he was with the disciples Jesus showed up again...

And this time Jesus addressed him directly.

Thomas then declares one of the defining statements about Jesus in all of the Gospels.

He proclaimed:

My Lord and my God!

This is one of the most powerful statements of confession and belief that Jesus Christ is God.

And it's no little matter...

You just don't say something like this especially in first century Jewish culture.

And note too...

That Jesus did not correct him.

A lot of religions believe Jesus was a prophet.

But he was clearly more than that.

Jesus, himself, declared he was more than a prophet or a moral teacher.

In fact, Jesus replied to Thomas...

confirming what he said.

Jesus replied:

Have you believed because you have seen me?

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.

And this is the point of the whole narrative...

Why St. John included it in his Gospel.

The message of the Gospel of John is to believe in Jesus Christ.

Belief is the key word of the entire Gospel.

It is a call to believe.

In fact, the last bit in our Gospel reading is:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

John begins this theme of belief early in his Gospel.

He writes:

[John the Baptist] came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

(John 1.7)

And of course, we have the most famous verse in the Bible that shouts the theme of our Gospel:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

(John 3.16)

You see what St. John wants us to understand...

The most important thing in his Gospel book is...

Belief in Jesus Christ.

Belief is ...

According to the dictionary:

An acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists.

It is trust, faith, or confidence in someone or something.

When we make a Christian confession of belief in Jesus Christ...

It is more than a belief that Jesus was a historical person.

It is belief that Jesus was and is the Messiah... the Christ.

The one who the Old Testament prophets foretold would come.

The Son of God.

God Incarnate.

The one who comes to take away the sin of the world.

It is belief that the way he conquered sin and death is through his redeeming death on the cross...

And his victorious resurrection.

And when we truly believe in Jesus Christ in his life, death, and resurrection, in his ascension and his imminent return...

When his grace fills us through faith...

We are filled with life changing hope.

The resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ is the first fruits of our future resurrection.

When we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, we can have a sure hope that we too will rise from the dead.

That's what we affirm in the creed...

The ancient words we say every Sunday morning...

The Nicene Creed has been the creedal confession of the church since the 4th century...

We will say the words in just a few minutes...

And we finish the Nicene Creed with:

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

The resurrection of the dead.

That's our hope.

That we will rise from the dead to be with Christ Jesus... forever.

And without the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

If there was no resurrection of our Lord.

We certainly won't have a resurrection from the dead either.

Death is not defeated by a metaphorical resurrection.

A metaphorical resurrection only defeats a metaphorical death.

And I believe we all know death is more than a metaphor.

The resurrection of our Lord is a real event.

That is what we believe.

Again, we affirm it in the creed.

Our creed is a statement of belief.

Which is why it is formed this way:

We believe in one God...

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ...

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...

It is a prayerful and hopeful statement of belief.

I appreciate the honesty that author and blogger Ben Irwin makes...

He says:

I don't always believe the words of the Nicene Creed.

But I say them anyway.

*Sometimes they're more of a confession of desire than conviction,
a statement of what I desperately hope to be true.¹*

The creed is a statement of belief that trains us...

Forms us...

Shapes our thinking.

Even in our doubts and struggles the creedal confession is a help even in the margins of our thinnest beliefs.

¹ Winfield Bevins, *Ever Ancient, Ever New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 70.

The creed brings us together as Christians in our core beliefs.

And as we grow in our belief...

In our conviction...

As the grace of God continues to fill us...

Gifting us with faith...

We find hope for the future and for the here and now.

Arguably the greatest theologian of the 20th century...

Swiss born Karl Barth,

Known as the theologian of grace...

Really a profound thinker...

on the day before his death,

spoke these last words to his friend on the telephone

on December 9, 1968:

Indeed, the world is dark.

Still, let us not lose heart! Never!

There is still someone who reigns,

not just in Moscow or in Washington or in Peking, but from above, from heaven. God is in command.

That's why I am not afraid.

Let us stay confident even in the darkest moments!

*Let us not allow our hope to sink,
hope for all human beings,
for all of the nations of the world!
God does not let us fall,
not a single one of us and not all of us together!
Someone reigns!*

For Barth, the reality was that no matter what:
Jesus is King, He is Lord.

That should be our take too.

No matter what happens on this earth...

Jesus is King.

No matter what tomorrow may bring...

Jesus is Lord.

Even if our doubts seem greater than our belief...

Even if our confession seems dull and lifeless...

Jesus is King and Lord.

So may we confess our belief...

May we say with a confident hope...

The words of St. Thomas...

Who proclaimed to Jesus:

My Lord and my God!

May we in our life of doubts grow into an ever-strengthening belief
that Jesus Christ rose from the grave
and he is coming back
to set the world at rights.

Amen.