

The lectionary readings are a three year cycle, covering a range of scripture. To my knowledge no scripture is repeated (because the lectionary focuses on a different gospel in each year), EXCEPT for John 20:19-31. Every year on the second Sunday of Easter, we tell this story. Does it include something so fundamental that it needs to be told?

I The two contrary voices which are side by side in this story

First, the scripture is not about what the tradition says it is about. It is not about Thomas’s doubt. Thomas asks for nothing that Jesus didn’t already do for the others. And Thomas asks the question which the early church needed to answer: is Jesus just a ghost story? Is Jesus a phantom? He can walk through doors, is he a ghost?

So Thomas says, until I see him and put my hand in his side – (proving the risen Christ is substantial, and that the Risen Lord actually is the one who was dead) – I won’t believe. Well done, Thomas! You have “put your finger” on 2 fundamentals of the resurrection.

But Thomas gets panned. He gets panned because at the conclusion of the story, a second story line is woven in. This line is speaking not about the resurrection, but about those of us who live after the first century. How blest are they who have not seen – and yet believe. By this measure, Thomas was “doubting.”

Well, you can see which story was dominant, Thomas is forever known, not as Didymus, but as “doubting”.

II On the importance of “doubt”, or at least questioning

It is this condemnation of “doubt” which is all the more UN-HELPFUL. The condemnation of doubt – or questioning was to “the church”’s gain when the church’s purpose was not faith, but power and control. But it is an unhelpful strategy in life, in democracy and in our current world. We do not live in a time when faith is handed down, to be received without thought (unless). We have to test. We have to test the church. We have to test the world. Because ***we live in a time where faith is discernment!***

If you follow blindly and unquestioningly you wind up in Guyana with the followers of Jim Jones, or as the chump of an internet scam.

III There is a danger in “doubt”

But there is one more danger to consider. There is a dark side to doubt. It is not really the questioning – but the instance in which the questioning is dominated by fear and despair. If what is going on is not a reasonable questioning – but **despair** masquerading as questions – then beware. For despair is the servant of death.

Bring your questions. Like a sword, they cut away that which is false. They test that which is true. Questions strengthen our faith.

But beware the dark side, Luke. Despair and fear, masquerading as inquiry are hostile to faith, hope and life.

Oh, and Thomas, get a new agent!