

April 24, 2022

**“The Holiness of Doubt”  
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

*Scripture Reading  
John 20:19-29*

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the religious leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As God has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

*But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”*

*A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”*

**Sermon**

I don't know about you but I would have been scared out of my wits if an apparition came through my locked door. The disciples didn't recognize Jesus until he shows them his wounds so of course, this would have freaked them out a little. They were already a mess, hunkered down and scared. It had only been a week since they had witnessed Jesus being tortured and murdered by the authorities and the disciples were known associates of Jesus.

The only one that wasn't too scared to leave the locked room was Thomas. I read this article by Rev. Scott Thomas that was written in defense of the doubting disciple. It talked about how Thomas kind of got a bad rap for questioning the validity of the story of the disciples. “Doubting Thomas” is etched into our language as one who doesn't believe. But this commentator went on to say:

*“There’s more to this story. First of all, there’s so much more to Thomas. We are always more than any one moment in our lives. Thomas has been with Jesus for the whole journey. He’s a bold disciple, not afraid to speak up at important moments.*

*In the story of Lazarus the disciples tell Jesus that it would be dangerous to go to the town where Lazarus has died. The authorities there are trying to kill Jesus. But when Jesus says, “No, I’m going,” only Thomas speaks up and says, “Let’s go with Jesus, so that we may at least die with him.” But we don’t call him Thomas the Courageous.*

*Then at the Last Supper, Thomas asks Jesus, “How can we know the way?”, prompting Jesus to answer, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” But we don’t call him Thomas the one who-asks-the-right-questions.”*

I have to say that if I were to hear such an outrageous story, I would want to see proof. Doubt is part of the engine of our God-given mind that propels us forward to seek the answers. Curiosity, doubt, our need to solve mysteries and puzzles, to have answers, those aren’t bad parts of us, or sinful parts of us. They are very important parts of our minds.

What if the Divinci, the Wright Brothers, Einstein, Madame Curie, or Thomas Edison didn’t doubt the existing theories that said it couldn’t be done. We wouldn’t be where we are.

But where do our doubts come in in regard to our faith? The path that began my journey into ministry started in Sunday school when I told my teacher that I doubted Jonah would have survived the stomach acid of the whale, and what propelled me back into Christianity after being so hurt by it was my doubt that the way a loving God made me was sinful or broken. We would be nowhere without a doubt.

In my experience, people who haven’t wrestled some with their faith haven’t really spent a lot of time deepening their relationship with God. Like the ones that say “If it’s in the bible I believe it word for word, end of story.” This is more about hard-line beliefs and less about faith.

Faith is believing things unseen. But it doesn’t say faith believing something unfelt. We can’t think our way into faith as much as feel it intuitively in here (our hearts). We feel the presence of God, we feel God when we love and give and feel our connection to each other and the natural world.

The Psalmist had doubts, Jacob wrestled with God all night long, and even Jesus asks God why God had forsaken him. Yet we know their faith was as deep as it comes.

For me, the most important part of this story is not that Thomas doubted. I think it is about the Holy Spirit. For it is through the Holy Spirit we can be moved out of our fear, we can unlock the door to our hearts and get the courage we need to love and be loved.

To share with other's the good news that even if they try and shut the Spirit of God out, it will come find us and meet us where we are, even hunkered down and afraid, still grieving, or confused about what to do next. There is no lock strong enough to keep God away.

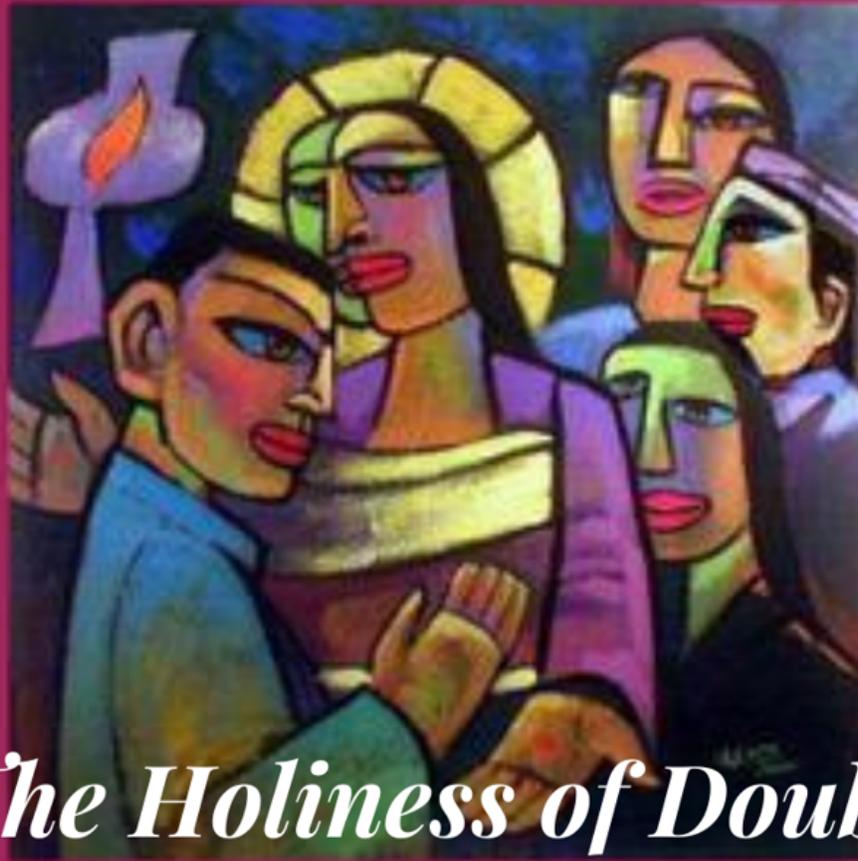
God enters in and says "Peace be with you", now remember this isn't the kind of peace we think of, the absence of war or just the absence of anxiousness.

When Jesus says it he is talking about the Hebrew greeting "shalom". This word is about a deep, sense of wholeness and well-being and it is not the kind of peace that the world will give you, it only comes from our intuitive and abiding connection to God. The peace that passes understanding.

We all have had moments in our life when we didn't come out looking too great. Maybe we said or did something that was not well thought out or was hurtful.

But those moments don't define who we are. It is the scope of our life that defines us and how well we live out Jesus' call to let love and the Spirit of God be the defining principles of our lives the best we can, one day at a time. AMEN

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*The Holiness of Doubt*

DO NOT NEGLECT  
TO SHOW  
HOSPITALITY  
TO STRANGERS,  
FOR BY DOING  
THAT SOME HAVE  
ENTERTAINED

*Angels*  
**UNAWARE**

HEBREWS



PARKSIDE COMMUNITY  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

