

## *“Easter every Sunday”*

Alone and afraid. The first Easter morning was full of uncertainty for Jesus’ disciples. The women – earlier in the day – have tried to share their remarkable encounter at the tomb, but the disciples are locked-down. Terrified.

According to John’s gospel, only Peter dared take a trip to the tomb – and found nothing. You can understand the fear that grips them.

Wild stories from the women; a gaping, empty grave; an absent friend. This is not a great way to start the week.

And then, in spite of the locked doors and the minds shut down by fear, there he stands: Jesus. Bearing the marks of his execution, offering words of peace.

This encounter changes things...for everyone but Thomas. Good old Thomas. This is his moment in the sun – his time to shine. Thomas has followed and heard and learned and worked alongside Jesus – just as the others have. He should be perfectly primed to believe as he hears the incredible story – this first attempt (by the men) at sharing the miracle of resurrection.

“Unless I see the mark of the nails...” he says “I will not believe.”

Now – Thomas gets a bad reputation on account of this statement. Doubting Thomas, we call him, (and anyone who shows hesitation around something accepted by an enthusiastic group.) We act like doubt is not a natural reaction to the fantastic. We act as though we are somehow more certain – more confident – more able...if we don’t express doubt. We do Thomas a great disservice by thinking and acting this way, because we are Thomas.

We get – as Thomas did – Easter, delayed. Resurrection after the fact.

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We have to catch up. We have to hear the story in our own time and from our own, trusted sources. We have to decide what ‘proof’ looks like.

Thomas has his reasons – and explains the boundaries of his belief. Jesus, as it turns out, will play by Thomas’ rules. One week later, under similar circumstances, Jesus appears and calls his bluff. “...see my hands...reach out your hand...”

Problem solved...for Thomas.

But here we are, disciples in our own right – gathered on this first day of the week; worried and wondering – praying for proof. It turns out that faith can only take us so far – especially when terrible things happen.

Faith doesn’t stop earthquakes or tsunamis; faith hasn’t brought an end to war in Ukraine, or Gaza, or Sudan, or any of the dozens of other places where humans bring their worst behaviour to bear on one another. Faith can help us endure these things, but let’s face it – we want more.

We want what Jesus’ first disciples wanted: the kingdom of God – peace and justice – no more weeping...no more misery. And we want it NOW.

Now I can’t set your boundaries. I don’t know what you need to help you open your eyes to the work of God in the world – to open your heart to the presence of Jesus – to open your life to the movement of the Spirit. I can’t give you a winning formula. I can only do my best to show you what it looks like when I believe.

That means that occasionally, I’m going to sound like Thomas on the first Easter evening. And sometimes, I’m the guy that just had his mind blown by an encounter with Jesus.

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It is true that the foundation of the Christian religion is this particular two-thousand-year-old miracle story. The resurrection is a very crucial piece of the puzzle. But being a follower of Jesus involves more than just acceptance of the resurrection. Our faith is not limited to our ability or willingness to accept / understand / trust in the stories ***about*** Jesus.

We are invited to be ready – to be open – to be curious - and to be willing to recognize the work of God when it taps us on the shoulder, or unexpectedly plays by ***our rules***.

You need certainty? You need proof? In this day and age, I don't blame you, but I don't know how to give that to you.

I do know there are moments in our lives that will offer a glimmer of hope. Against all odds, you may find yourself assured – you will feel like the tide is turning – like the sun has come out from behind a cloud. Maybe when these things happen, you could admit that God just showed up – that Jesus just showed you his humanity...or that a human just helped you see Jesus.

The miracle is not that we had an ‘Easter event’ way back when. The miracle is that it is Easter every day. The ‘proof’ we demand is lurking in the wonder of Creation. The mystery of the resurrection of Jesus is played out in a million little ways every single day. Our willingness to be aware and to share in the delight of discovery may be what brings Easter to someone who desperately needs a miracle. Our response to the mystery – our reaction to the miracle – our engagement with God's work in the world – these are the things that define our faith. Such is the witness that will change the world.