

CS Sermon for Easter 2 1 John 1v1-2v2 and John 20v19-31
12th April Certainty and Doubt.

What is it that makes us certain about our Christian faith?

RICHARD III: Did you see the reburial of Richard III on television? I was watching the reactions of the people of Leicester. As people lined the streets they were overcome with the emotion of:-

- **seeing** the bones of the King pass close by, so the life of Richard III became real to them. He was not just a history lesson.
- Ordinary people queued up and **touched** the coffin containing the bones or lay a flower on it so they could relate to Richard III directly.
- Benedict Cumberbatch and Wendy Duldig (17th great niece of Richard) and Michael Ibsen (whose DNA was used to establish the bones authenticity) **knew** that they were distant descendants of Richard and their voices cracked with emotion as they **gave testimony** in the service.
- The people didn't **just hear** an actor speak his words but they connected with someone who was a descendant of Richard. This was a time for the senses and emotions They **sensed the presence** of Richard and they would say after, "I was there and I have **met the King**",

Is it wrong to doubt?

Have you ever heard that comment that "seeing is believing". We are often incredulous of things that we just hear, thinking that it is sounds so unlikely that we would like to see it ourselves, before we

really commit. It is a very fair point of view. It is just like the promises made about the election. We value the action and not the promise. We vote for those who can prove it.

THOMAS

Thomas was like that. When the disciples said "Jesus is alive he was with us last night We **saw Him**". He didn't believe them and said "unless **I SEE** the nail marks in His hands and **PUT** my finger where the nail marks were and **PUT** my hand in His side, I **will** not believe it". The other 10 disciples must either have thought "He's in a right mood, he won't even believe his friends" or "Yes, I felt like that on Sunday I was really unsure", depending on their demeanour.

But Thomas the true friend of Jesus was being honest and real to his own feelings and did not have the certainty of the other disciples. We tend to deprecate his character by calling him "Thomas the doubter". Yet earlier in the week He had been the realist when he asked the question they all wanted to know "Show us the way?" when Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn14).

HONEST DOUBT

I want to encourage you that **it's not wrong to have honest doubt** and to question what we believe so that others can know how we are feeling and address their doubts also. If only people would confront us with their doubts and ask us questions about what we believe so that we can help them confront their doubts. Often we hide our own doubts or label other people weak when they have

them. The vulnerable position of expressing our own doubts helps us to be able to learn and grow as Christians.

Questioning our own certainty in the presence of God in the face of **other people's points of view also helps us to grow**. We need to be open to God and challenge our certainties. These certainties may exclude others who have a different viewpoint. So what is it that we need to be certain about in our Christian faith?

BELIEVING WITHOUT SEEING (John 20)

When Thomas finally met Jesus a week later Jesus didn't immediately say that **He must not have any doubts** at all - that would be to deny the subtlety of this passage. No, Jesus invited Thomas to have a closer look and to touch His wounds. Theologically it shows that developing true faith is hands on (touch) and it is about stepping out and experiencing it for ourselves (seeing). I believe that, **only** then does Jesus use the incident to challenge Thomas - **and the others**, who also had only believed on seeing. He had wanted them to believe the women's story, even **without** seeing. This is the position we are in. We do not see with our physical eyes, but we **can see in faith**. And that is the exciting part!

THE LETTER FROM JOHN (I JOHN 1) – CERTAINTY OF FAITH

In our other passage, the author John was a disciple of Jesus who fully experienced Jesus with his senses – he heard Jesus speak, he saw Him with his eyes and he touched Him with his hands after the resurrection. **He believed in Him with absolute certainty**. He also **saw** Jesus do miracles like turning water into wine, heal people, die on a cross and come alive again. **FIRST** John's letter is written to new

Christians **who had not seen or met Jesus, like us** and he wanted to give them **certainty** that Jesus is still alive.

Today we can have doubts about whether Jesus is alive, but the message of Easter is that **Jesus conquered death and he is alive today**. Jesus offers us **eternal life**, if we are in fellowship with Him. That means we do not have to be afraid of death. **DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?**

We often have doubts about whether we are good enough. Whether there is anyone who could really forgive us. **SECOND** John says we are liars if we say we are good enough. We can be *certain* we have all sinned and **none** of us deserve to know Jesus at all. **BUT** John also says "if we **confess our sins** then God *will* forgive us and purify us from all unrighteousness". That means that however bad we are, we can receive forgiveness and **we go from death to life**. **DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?**

CONCLUSION(LIGHT): Friends, believing in Jesus, saying sorry for bad things we do; and receiving forgiveness from Jesus, is like going from the darkness of a tunnel into the bright sunlight. **Jesus is the Light of the world** so turning to Christ, like we promise to do in our baptism is life giving. It is like coming out of the tunnel. The dark centre of the tunnel represents the doubts we have but we cannot afford to wallow in those doubts for ever and we need to turn towards the light in faith.

When **Thomas** saw Jesus and sensed His presence again he said "My Lord and my God" He realised in that statement He could be restored, there was light at the end of the tunnel and there was a

future which was beyond the death and agony of doubt that he had had. The future was bright, the future was Jesus.

We too, in the light of Christ can move forward from the agony of doubt that we experience when things don't go quite as we had planned and know that next time (and the time after) there is light at the end of the tunnel.