

Let us pray,

Lord, help us to not be ashamed of our doubts, but to use them to grow closer to you.

Amen.

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On Friday, the church commemorates the Apostle Thomas.

He is most remembered by his doubting of Jesus' resurrection without proof.

There seems to be a negative connotation with Thomas.

As if he wasn't allowed to doubt what his fellow disciples were saying.

There is also this underlying belief or expectation that we are not allowed to doubt Jesus.

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When it comes to belief, I think all of us deserve some grace when it comes to what it is that we believe.

These disciples especially, put full faith in this one man, making extraordinary claims.

Sure he did extraordinary works through miracles.

But healing someone is way different than someone rising from the dead.

Especially rising from the dead after the death that Jesus endured.

My goodness how could a body ever survive that?

How could a body, so broken, so beaten, so drained of life, ever come back to life.

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Doubting Thomas wasn't a bad guy, he was just being realistic.

He was making a logical judgement based on the things that he has experienced and witnessed up until this point.

The only person who brought someone back from the dead, was Jesus, and now he himself is dead.

I like to consider myself a pretty strong believer in Jesus.

I am all in.

I bought the story, heck I dedicated my life to this story.

And I am telling you, if I witnessed what the disciples witnessed with Jesus on the Cross.

My faith would have been shaken too.

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My thoughts in that moment probably would have been, where in the world is God!

Why would a good God allow such brutality to the chosen one!

Some messiah, Jesus came to save us, and yet here he is, dying on a cross, just like the rest of us would.

No miracle, no salvation, no judgement, the bad guys won, and God lost.

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If I witnessed the crucifixion, that is how I would have been feeling.

So if some of my friends came by, told me that the guy who was just brutally murdered, buried and closed tight in a tomb was raised from the dead.

I would call them all crazy or delusional.

Wishful thinkers at best.

Evil won, God lost.

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But we don't have to have witnessed the brutality of the crucifixion to have these similar feelings today.

We just have to look around us.

How many of us have watched a loved one die too early.

A loved one live in pain.

How many of us are suffering in ways that seem like the God of this world has abandoned us, and was left dead on that cross 2,000 years ago?

How many of us see or experience injustices, people being targeted, mistreated, attacked, oppressed.

Wondering, where is this savior that these churches keep saying is here?

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Doubting Thomas to me, seems like the only one who was having the appropriate reaction.

Look around you, where is God?

Jesus is dead, its over.

In my ordination vows, I had to promise that I would not preach illusory hope.

That I would not make false promises, that I would not lead you to pastures filled with wolves.

And for that reason, I want us to understand, that the feelings that Thomas had and the feelings that we all have in these horrific times of life are valid.

This feeling of Jesus abandoning us in times of great pain and sorrow is real.

And more often than not, the pain of the crucifixion, easily outweighs the hope of the resurrection at times.

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But here is the thing.

Just like with Jesus, if we aren't willing to enter into the times of pain and feelings of abandonment.

Our resurrection moments wont be possible.

Jesus had to die, so that new life could have been produced.

The old ways of sin, had to die, in order for new ways of righteousness to flourish.

We ourselves must die in the flesh, in order to enter into paradise.

In the moment, death is horrible, painful, gut wrenchingly evil.

It makes us feel things that make us doubt the goodness of God.

But the promise of the resurrection cannot be realized without our death.

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We look at the pains and trails and death of the world as if it is a bad thing.

But Jesus is calling us to look at them differently.

Jesus is calling us to look at them as necessary transitions, into the paradise and freedom of resurrection.

I wouldn't go as far as saying that suffering is good.

But what I would say, is that if God Godself required suffering be brought upon himself, in order for resurrection to be possible, we too must endure.

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Its ok to doubt that,

Its ok to question it.

Its ok to wonder where God went.

But it is not good or helpful to stay there.

The suffering of Christ endured for a day.

His resurrection is forever.

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May we remember that our story is greater than this short life of ours.

May we never forget that the promise of eternal life is the point of all of this.

And that eternal life starts now.

When we recognize that this life is not the end, we can start to live differently.

We can start to learn how to not be afraid of suffering, to not be afraid of death.

And instead, go and be the disciple that Jesus needs us to be.

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Here is the truth.

Suffering is guaranteed, but so is an eternity in paradise with our Lord.

Is a lifetime of suffering worth an eternity of paradise?

We all have to come to grips with that question.

But what I do know is that when we stop looking at life as a finite resource, and as something that is eternal.

Our perspective changes, we can stop living in fear of what we may lose, and instead, start focusing on what we can gain with God.

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The cross wasn't a loss for God, because in the suffering and death of Jesus on the Cross, God gained the world back.

God brought us back into his kingdom.

And thanks be to God, for the love and suffering of the resurrected and eternal Christ.

May we live eternally now, and be not afraid of the world.

But embrace the hope of what can be, and what will be.

Its ok to doubt, but don't let your doubt become your god.

Amen.