

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

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DOUBT

and the true depth of faith

by Drew Downs

Doubt is frequently paired with faith as an opposite, bearing oppositional qualities, or reflecting two ends of a spectrum. We do this to speak of certain aspects within belief or to create confidence in the outcomes of our decisions. Decisions that come from characteristics we call doubt or belief. But this is limiting, rigid, and smooths out the rough edges of reality, experience, and how humans live within a natural world full of paradoxes and conflicting developments.

While doubt and faith serve as simple opposites for definitional purposes, they reflect complimentary aspects of how our brains actually work. That doubts are present aspects of an active, living faith. That faith is necessary for us to let go of certainty long enough to question our experience. So when we vilify doubt, we do so in ways that also vilify faith. Because they are both present and necessary for belief. For trust. As we listen, discern, and respond.

EASTER

2026

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

(Still) Risen Again!

I have a confession. While I love Easter and Holy Week and Lent (and it is really our best time of year, if we're being honest) and we make our best church during this time, it is always so exhausting and I get anxious and start to dread the experience. I even said out loud in the middle of last week "I wish the week were over already." And even as the words came out of my mouth, I realized I didn't really mean it. Yes, I meant it emotionally in the moment, but not truly. I was trying to speak to my anxiety and fear, which make everything harder to do when they are raging and in control. Like when I have a lot to do / worry about / fret over / wait on / wonder about. All of it.

I didn't fully mean it, though. Because Holy Week and Easter Day are the best. The Triduum, with its service and heartache and rejoicing over the course of three successive days is always beautiful and moving and exciting in equal measures. They really never disappoint.

And then Easter returns with joyous grace and we gather again with renewed generosity and hope. And we see people we miss because this is the time they show up and this is still home and we rejoice in it.

The familiarity and newness of both the day and the season of Easter is always a renewing delight for me. And it couldn't come at a better time. Because I always need it when it arrives. I welcome it again with open arms and great reunion joy. Like new buds in the garden, blooms on the tree, a cat sunning itself on the patio chair, the neighbor mowing his lawn for the first time this year, the sun returning like one of those friends we welcome back, happy. And still amid this all, I yearn for a nap, and with confidence I will receive it, mercy.

With love,
Drew+

EASTER

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Easter 2A

April 12, 2026

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

John 20:19-31

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 Judeans, 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 the Father 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."

EASTER

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Reflection

Poor Thomas. He gets a bad rep for his supposed “doubting” here, but let’s clarify a few things. It doesn’t say he actually *did* doubt. Jesus brings it up, but not to call Thomas out but to contrast belief with doubt – he is saying blessing goes to those who believe without verifying.

The lesson here is two-fold. He speaks to these disciples, most of whom are hiding rather than serving. Only Thomas seems willing to venture out into the world. Which means only Thomas is doing what Jesus commanded. So when Jesus appears to the screwups, Thomas gets jealous. Wouldn’t you?

I suspect it is the other disciples that needed the appearance more than Thomas. His appeal, then, is about getting what the others got. So when Jesus comes a second time and gives Thomas what he gave the others, what does he say? Blessed are those who have no choice but to trust without seeing. In other words, none of them is so blessed! And yet *everyone* who they talk to may be!

The Easter stories offer the twin themes of action and relationship. In Jesus, we are blessed by his action and blessed by participating ourselves. And we are blessed in our relationship with God, with neighbor, and with ourselves. In this way, we are connected to this moment, not just because it happened and we go to church and hear about it, but because these stories and these people we serve with provide us with an invitation to believe in ways that truly bless us.

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