

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

May 31, 2026



DOUBT

an essential attribute of faith

by Drew Downs

Gospel translators are afraid to get this one right. In Matthew 28:17, Jesus appears one last time to his followers and it says that they worshipped him *and* doubted. But ever since the King James Version, translators have refused to offer the most accurate reading. And we can all see why. Tradition, obviously. And we wouldn't want to confuse people. It might seem like their doubt would undercut their belief. So they've added to "some" to the text for the sake of clarity.

Rather than mistranslate the passage, let's engage with its implication: that the people closest to Jesus worshipped him with doubt in their hearts. It wasn't the opposite of faith for them, but the recognizable fear of adopting a countercultural lifestyle! They committed their lives to a way of being that was both difficult and unpopular! Of course there'd be butterflies. Besides, how else can we believe, if we don't test it, if we don't think there's a chance we're wrong?

AFTER PENTECOST

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!

The Trinity

Christian theology is famously dogmatic in the modern imagination. We have things we believe and treat those concepts as set and ordered, almost obvious. Something easy, that children can be taught and adults all know with total conviction.

This, friends, is hilarious. Because Christianity isn't like that and has never been like that. One of our most famous doctrines took centuries to develop and requires a loose grip on certainty to contend with honestly.

We say that God is three (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). And one. At the same time. And at all times. Always three and one and also never not three and one.

We can struggle to make this make sense. And many do. But here's the deal. We can't have it any other way. We've tried. It doesn't work. God can't go into something and become Jesus. Jesus can't stop being God, even for a second. It's messy and also elegant and makes more sense the less you struggle with it, like a finger trap. Because the problem is when you pull, defiant, certain that this is the way, that you have it all figured out.

Eastern Christianity compares it to dancing, to relationship, to communion. This still feels fresh to modernist American Christians obsessed with certainty and order, structure and definition. This is also important as we add in other elements like divine, human, sin, and grace. Because all of it boils down to our relationship with God and with one another.

With love,
Drew+

AFTER PENTECOST

2026

FOR SUNDAY

First Sunday after Pentecost

May 31, 2026

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Reflection

This gospel passage is known as "The Great Commission" which is often quoted for the purpose of encouraging Christians to be evangelists, that our place in the world is to proclaim the gospel to everyone.

AFTER PENTECOST

This reading of the passage doesn't sit right with me, though I can see where it comes from. And the main reason is that Jesus gave an earlier command that should have a greater place than this one. When asked by a scribe what is the great commandment, Jesus said to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Then he goes on to say that everything else hangs from these two: which would include this one.

Loving your neighbor as yourself ought to put a leash on the unabashed conversion approach that many have toward the Great Commission. Precisely because the purpose *isn't* uniformity or divine control, it is to love. Though many will say *that's why I'm doing this! I love them!* But this strikes me as justification more than inspiration. Because love would lead to a whole host of other postures toward the person: encouragement, joy, sacrifice, honor. When we love, we do these things for people. The pursuit of conversions is more about winning souls for Team Jesus. It isn't love for them that inspires that behavior, it's following what they assume is the command and then saying that love inspires it.

It is also notable that Jesus tells them to teach what he has commanded. It strikes me that this is less the greatest command as much as the last one. *I've taught you, now teach others.*

In this way, Jesus puts the emphasis on the *previous* commands, which revolved around love, reordering of society, economic and social equity, and rejecting oppressive systems and practices. In this way, Jesus's previous commands have all been tangible and relational. So now, he seems to be saying, focus on spreading *this* good news to the ends of the earth.

How does this change our view of evangelism, then? Since Jesus has been infinitely more focused on saving people's lives (and livelihoods) and not merely their souls.

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