

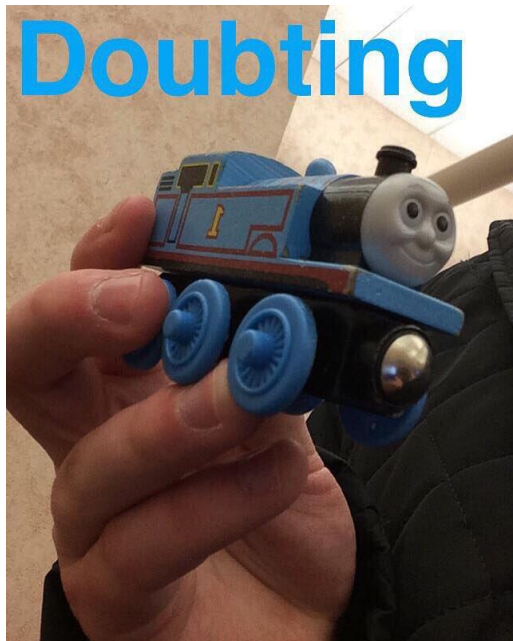
“Reclaiming Freedom, Joy and Wonder”  
John 20:19-29

Today our focus is on the story of Thomas, the disciple who doubted the resurrection. He is the one who was not with the other disciples when they saw Jesus after the resurrection and so had doubts about their witness.



In order to get to the heart of the story, let's consider these memes:





One cartoon which I could not use had two disciples, one was saying, “He has risen,” while Thomas responded by saying, “Sounds like Fake News to me.” Thomas has been used through the ages as an example of lack of faith; someone we don’t want to be. But today, I would like to invite you to look at Thomas as someone who was allowed to be himself; doubts and all. It is wonderful that Jesus created such a community where someone could freely express their doubts without being shunned from the community of faith. The environment which Jesus created among his disciples must have been open enough to allow doubt to be shared out loud instead of being denied or hidden. Instead of rejecting his doubts and questions, Jesus found a great opportunity to nurture Thomas’s faith and equip him for the journey ahead. The questions and doubts that Thomas raised became tools for teaching him about a deeper trust in God that led him to do great deeds of faith. Thomas helped spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to a multitude of people. The members of the Syrian Orthodox Church in India tell us that it was Thomas who brought the good news to India.

Let’s listen to John 20:19-29

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 Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” <sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>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.”

<sup>26</sup>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." <sup>27</sup>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." <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>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."

Each of the disciples was unique in their way of relating to the teachings, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and each was affirmed and loved by Jesus for who they were, even if they didn't comply or fully get what Jesus was teaching.

We learn from an early age that fitting in is so important to our survival that we often let go of our uniqueness. As a result, we forgo our sense of joy in life. But fear not! Today is about reclaiming that joy and that sense of belonging to God and to one another with the fullness of who we are.

I am going to invite you to listen to a children's book called "The Day the Crayons Quit" by Drew Daywalt.

This book can become a metaphor for how we can rediscover energy and joy for life when we let go of expectations and the things that hold us back. But I need your help. We will read a part of the book together. I will be the narrator. I need a Red Crayon, Purple Crayon, Beige Crayon, Gray Crayon, and White Crayon.

Narrator: One day in class, Duncan went to take out his crayons and found a stack of letters with his name on them.

RED Crayon: Hey Duncan, It's me, RED Crayon. We need to talk. You make me work harder than any of your other crayons. All year long I wear myself out coloring fire engines, apples, strawberries and EVERYTHING ELSE that's RED. I even work on holidays! I have to color all the Santa's at Christmas and all the hearts on Valentine's Day! I NEED A REST! Your overworked friend, RED Crayon.

PURPLE Crayon: Dear Duncan, all right, listen. I love that I'm your favorite crayon for grapes, dragons, and wizard's hats, but it makes me crazy that so much of my gorgeous color goes outside the lines. If you don't start coloring inside the lines soon, I'm going to completely lose it! Your very neat friend, PURPLE crayon.

BEIGE Crayon: Dear Duncan, I'm tired of being called "light brown" or "dark tan" because I am neither. I am BEIGE and I am proud. I'm also tired of being second place to Mr. BROWN crayon. It's not fair that BROWN gets all the bears, ponies and puppies while the only things I get are turkey dinners (if I'm lucky) and wheat, and let's be honest – when was the last time you saw a kid excited about coloring wheat? Your BEIGE friend, BEIGE crayon.

GRAY Crayon: Duncan, GRAY crayon here. You're killing me! I know you love elephants and I know that elephants are GRAY – but that's a lot of space to color in all by myself. And don't even get me started on your rhinos, hippos and humpback whales – you know how tired I am after handling one of those big things? Such big animals – baby penguins are GRAY you know. So are very tiny rocks and pebbles. How about those once in a while to give me a break? Your very tired friend, GRAY crayon.

WHITE Crayon: Dear Duncan, You color with me, but why? Most of the time I'm the same color as the page you are using me on, WHITE. If I didn't have a BLACK outline, you wouldn't even know I was there! I'm not even in the rainbow. I'm only used to color snow or to fill in empty space between other things. And it leaves me feeling – well – empty. We need to talk. Your empty friend, WHITE crayon.

This continued on with the black, green, yellow, blue, pink, and peach crayons. Each one of them complaining to Duncan. "Well, poor Duncan just wanted to color...and of course he wanted his crayons to be happy. And that gave him an idea.

When Duncan showed his teacher his new picture, she gave him an A for coloring...and A+ for creativity!"

Basically, Duncan let go of the idea of coloring according to people's expectations and colored in new ways. Instead of insisting on staying with what he knew and what was comfortable for him, Duncan was willing to do something new and that made all the difference.

Where is God calling us today to reclaim our sense of wonder, questioning, and joy? How do we create safe spaces like Jesus did to allow for doubt, for growth, and for new insights to emerge? Amen.