

2Easter, John 20:19-31
Rev. Kimberly Glenn
April 12, 2026

Protect me, O God, for we take refuge in you; Together we believe that You are our Lord, the eternal source of our strength and goodness. Amen.

Most of us have had a moment when someone told us something that is so extraordinary, so unexpected that our first instinct was not to believe it really happened. Your friend says something like, "You're not going to believe what just happened!" Your ears perk up and so do your inner sensors that are always on the alert for a scam or a tall tale. Before they even finish the sentence, something in you causes you to think maybe, but maybe not!

Or maybe you hear a doctor deliver a diagnosis that you just did not expect. You wonder if the doctor misread a test or miscalculated a result. Maybe a life plan suddenly unravels. Then someone says to you, often with the best intentions, "It's going to be okay." "God has a plan." "Just have faith."

Something inside you wants to believe those words are true but something about the reality of the situation you are in holds you back. You've lived long enough to know that not everything works out as first hoped. You've seen enough to know that promises can break, trust can fail. The hope we hold when we begin to chart a new course can lead us to a broken heart. So you learn not to rush into things, you learn to pause and think things through. You ask questions and wonder about all the possible outcomes or answers.

In today's gospel story that is where Thomas is. The other disciples come to him breathless with excitement. The disciples said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord!" But

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Thomas wasn't there when the Lord appeared to them. He didn't see what they saw. He didn't feel what they felt. And so Thomas says what any honest person might say: "Unless I see... unless I touch... I can't believe he is alive ..." Thomas did not say he would never believe but he questions. And if we're honest, so do we.

As the story goes, it is evening on Easter Day. The resurrection has already happened but it hasn't yet changed everything. In fact, things seem to have gone back to what they were before. But the tomb is empty. The women have seen angels. Mary has seen the Lord. The disciples were a little, or maybe a lot, freaked out by it all. They are hiding for fear of their lives. The doors are locked. The room is sealed for fear of what might happen next. They are afraid that hope itself might be too dangerous to trust.

And into that room, that locked, anxious, uncertain room, Jesus comes and stands among them. He does not knock. He does not wait for permission to enter. He just appears. The first thing he says is not, "Why are you afraid?" Not, "Why did you leave and run away when I needed you?" Instead he says, "Shalom. Peace be with you."

Thomas didn't see him or hear him say that. He told them he needed to see and touch and hear him for himself. That's why we've come to call him Doubting Thomas. But there is a Christian scholar and author named Frederick Buechner who has written about this very gospel story. He says, in his book *Wishful Thinking*, that this is just

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Thomas being human. Because faith, Buechner says, is not something you *have* once and for all. Faith, he says, is something you *do*. It's a verb. A movement. A journey without a map. And sometimes that journey, like almost any journey any of us have ever been on, can look a lot like doubt.

Buechner recalls the story of Abraham and Sarah, two old people, long past the age of possibility, who are told by God that they will have a child. And what do they do? They laugh. They laugh because it's absurd. They laugh because it's impossible. They laugh, maybe a nervous life instead of a hearty one, because something in them half-believes it might be true. Later, when their promised child was born he was called Isaac, which means laughter.

Faith, *real* faith, often begins not with certainty, but with a kind of holy, trembling laughter at the wildness of God's promises; at the wildness of our actually perceiving and believing that God means what He says.

And that brings us back to Thomas. Thomas doesn't laugh. He resists. But underneath it all, his resistance is a response to his questioning: *Can this be true? Can death really be undone? Can wounds become the testament to glory? Maybe he is wondering: Can I trust what is happening to me?*

And Jesus comes again into the locked room a week later. He enters through the disciples' fear, through their doubt. He enters right through the walls we all build up to protect ourselves. And again he says, "Peace be with you." Then he turns immediately

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to focus on the one who is struggling. He says, “Thomas... come here. Touch my hands. Put them inside the wound on my side. Do not doubt, but believe.”

Notice what Jesus does *not* do. Jesus does not shame Thomas. He does not exclude him. He does not say, “You should have known I would rise like I said I would.” Instead, he meets him; meets him right in the middle of his doubt. Because, you see, doubt is not the opposite of faith. Indifference is. Doubt is, in fact, often the place where faith begins. Faith begins with curiosity and begins with questions. Thomas answers with one of the most profound confessions in all of Scripture: “My Lord and my God.”

Thomas declares his belief without touching. He declares it after an encounter. Because, you see, faith is not about proof. As Buechner says, almost nothing that really matters can be proved. You can prove gravity. You can prove math equations. But you cannot prove love. You cannot prove beauty. You cannot prove that God’s power of love and life is stronger than death. And you cannot prove God.

Faith is a verb, Buechner says, and faith is what happens in that locked room. Nothing about the outside world changed. Rome was still in power and threats were still real. But something had changed *within them*. Peace had entered the room and has entered them. Jesus breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

So what does this mean for us? Because we have our own locked rooms, don’t we? Rooms of fear and grief and uncertainty about the future. Rooms where hope feels

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risky. Rooms where belief feels like too much to ask because the images of reality are so hard to reconcile with the peace of God.

And yet it is into those rooms that Christ comes. Over and over He comes. Not when we have everything figured out. Not when our faith is perfect but right in the middle of our questioning. Right in the middle of our *almost-believing*. And maybe that is where Buechner's laughter meets Thomas's doubt. Because faith is not pretending everything makes sense. Abraham and Sarah laughed because God's promise made no sense to them.

But Faith is not based on certainty. Faith is this: Standing in a locked room and hearing an unbelievable promise and then somehow taking one small step toward it anyway, even if that step comes with a nervous laugh. Even if it comes with trembling hands and heart.

The truth of the resurrection does not depend on the strength of your faith. It depends on the faithfulness of God. Jesus does not wait for perfect belief before he appears. He comes anyway. He offers himself to us and through us anyway. And maybe, just maybe, faith is opening the door of whatever locked room you're in... and discovering that Christ has already been there all along.

Peace be with you.

Amen.