

Sermon for Easter 2A - April 7, 2002 (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)
 Sermon text John 20:29 "**...Happy are people with faith in Me, no-matter they never see me."**

(also from Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 1:8-9 "You never saw Jesus, but you love Him. You don't see Him now, but you believe in Him. Your faith fills you with great happiness, and through your faith you will receive God's gift, the salvation of your soul.")

[Please note, a preferable sign for "faith" in this message is TRUST. It is a stronger sign than the English "double-F" sign.]

SOME DAYS YOU ONLY GET FAITH

We like to pick-on Jesus' Disciple, named THOMAS. We call him "Doubting Thomas."

But is that really fair to Thomas? As you read the story of Jesus rising from the dead, you see that ALL of His disciples doubted. Remember the story...

Who had the FIRST news about Jesus' resurrection?

- (1) Angels
- (2) Soldiers guarding the tomb. They saw the angel, saw the stone roll back, and felt the earthquake.
- (3) The women that came to the tomb early Sunday morning. The angels told them the news, "Jesus is not dead. He is alive, as He promised."

The women ran back to the 11 Disciples. Remember that the Disciples were still scared and hiding. The women told them the news, "Jesus is alive!" Did the Disciples believe the women? No. They all continued to doubt, fear, and hide.

But it is interesting, that the soldiers told the High Priest what happened in the tomb, and the priests believed them! The priests didn't like the news, and they paid the soldiers to change their story. But when Jesus' disciples heard the same news, they all doubted.

Only Peter and John went to investigate. The tomb was open. The body was gone. The tomb was empty; except Jesus' burial clothes still lay flat.

So don't blame Thomas. He is not the only doubter. All the Disciples doubted. And we doubt.

In English, we have only one word: DOUBT
But in ASL we have two different signs:

- (1) "I-doubt-it!" [two bent fingers in front of your face]
- (2) "Uncertain" ["doubt" signed with two fists, looks like the sign for "maybe."]

The Bible has more words for doubt:

- (3) "Confused."
 - (4) "Sitting on the fence." Really, the Greek words mean, you have two different minds, or you are trying to stand in two different places.
 - (5) "Decide for myself if I will obey God." It means I can VETO God's leading.
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Jesus says that Thomas has which kind of doubt? 1... 2... 3... 4... or 5...?

*Number 1: "I-doubt-it." I don't believe. I can't trust God.

But please notice that Thomas says he can change his mind. He needs proof. And – good for him – Thomas explains what kind of proof will change his mind. He said "If I can't see His hands and if I can't touch nail holes in His hands, I won't believe." Thomas could say that sentence in a positive way, "If I see His hands, and if I touch the nail holes in His hands, I WILL believe!"

Thomas did not have a closed mind. Yes, his mind was closed against human arguments. Nothing anybody says can change his mind. Only Jesus Himself had the proof that can convince Thomas the Jesus is alive. Thomas' mind was still very open for GOD to change his mind.

And He did!

Reading from the Bible:

Jesus said to Thomas, "Your finger touch My hand and see. And touch My side. Don't doubt* but believe."

Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Because you see Me, you believe? Happy are people with faith in Me, no-matter they never see Me."

Suppose-if Jesus never appeared to Thomas? Suppose-if Thomas never saw the proof? Can he [Thomas] still trust God?

If you never on earth see Jesus in person, can you still trust His Word that He lives?

If you never see visions of angels, can you still believe God's promise?

If you never have proof, can you know

that He loves you?

....He forgives you?

....His death paid your debt to God?

When life becomes confusing, and the world takes away all hope,
can you still trust in God to care for you?

Yes.

Some days you have no proof. You only get faith.

Some days bad things happen,

and you pray,

then worse things happen.

Do you give up? Or do you still trust Him?

The Bible has a story about a very sick boy. The boy's father cried to Jesus, "Lord, I believe! Please help my doubt!" Jesus did. Jesus healed the boy, and that really solved the father's doubt.

One time many people rejected Jesus. They all left. Jesus was alone with His 12 Disciples. He asked them, "Will you also leave?"

Peter answered, "Lord, to whom can we go? You alone have the words for eternal life."

God's love for us never stops. No-matter what happens around us, we can still trust Him.

Some days you will see God do wonderful things to help you. Praise Him!

Remember those days...

Remember His promise

on other days, when the only thing you have is... faith.