

Church family, there are things that make me have doubts.

- When the bag says that a dog food has new and improved taste, who tested it?
- Can you cry underwater?
- Can you get cornered in a round room?
- Why is it called a TV set when there's only one?
- Why do cars have speedometers that go up to 130 mph, when you legally can't go that fast on any road?
- If corn oil is made from corn, and olive oil is made from olives, what is baby oil made from?

Doubters. Dirty, Dirty Doubters. And in our text today, we meet the most famous doubter of all time. But today I want to redirect you in this passage. Because to just focus on Thomas's doubt will cause you to miss one of the most profound statements of praise offered in the gospels.

Today in our series Lettuce Pray: A Spiritual Salad we are going to look at prayers of praise. Peppers of praise. All throughout the bible we find examples of prayers of praise. All we need to do is turn to the book of Psalms. From Genesis all the way to Revelations, we find prayers of praise.

In Revelation chapter 4 you will find a description of heavenly worship. The 24 elders (12 tribes of Jacob and 12 apostles) join together in offering words of praise. I think you'll be familiar with the first one. Vs. 8, Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come." The other one is also well known. Vs 11, "You are worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things and by your will they existed and were created. "

Early in Luke, after the annunciation, we find Mary and Lazarus offering up elaborate prayers of praise known as the Magnificat and the Benedictus.

But Thomas's prayer of praise stands unique among all those prayers. It's only 5 words long. "My Lord and my God." One of the shorter statements that Jesus heard from anyone.

And Jesus had conversations with lots of people. Pharisees, Sadducees, a bleeding woman, a demon-possessed man. He talked to those who were lame, blind, rich and poor. He talked to soldiers, scribes, politicians, priests and tax collectors. Of course, he talked to his disciples.

Don't you think that a lot of what Jesus heard would mirror the same things we talk about today? They talked about everyday matters. Where they caught fish last night. Who's wife makes the best challah. Which Jerusalem festival was everyone going to this year? Passover, Pentecost, or Sukkoth.

Jesus fielded compliments. Jesus absorbed accusations. He handled requests, he handled petitions. In one conversation he might hear pleas for healing and in the next he might hear deceitful words from those trying to trip him up.

Jesus would have heard gossip and rumors. Would Thomas finally break down and ask Rhema to marry him? Would Matthew, the sacrilegious tax collector, ever have a relationship with his parents again? What crazy construction project is Herod having us pay taxes for now?

Boasts, confessions, truths, lies. Sincere and insincere flattery, Jesus heard it all. Many times over and over and over again.

Of all the words uttered by Jesus' admirers, detractors, friends and adversaries, today's 5 simple words..."my Lord and my God." Is truly unique. It is Thomas, doubting Thomas that utters them.

What makes them so unique? Thomas was the only person in any of the 4 gospels to call Jesus "Lord and God." Peter came close with his confession when Jesus asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" To this Peter responded that Jesus was "the Messiah".

But Thomas? He hit the game-winning grand slam when he proclaimed Jesus to be God. And this proclamation? It's even more impressive than Peter's. Want to know why? Thank goodness! Peter says that Jesus is the Messiah only after a period of interrogation from Jesus. Thomas only needed one thing to get to his statement. Touching Jesus, his hands and side.

"My Lord and my God". Who dared to speak such things? It was Thomas, doubting Thomas. The only person in all the gospels to profess Jesus as Lord and God was the same person who expressed his doubts openly several times prior to this event.

Back in the 11th chapter of the gospel of John, we find Jesus getting ready to go to Bethany. They just learned that Lazarus had died. The disciples can't believe what they are hearing. The Jews are out to find Jesus so they can kill him. Going there would place any one of them in harm's way. In 11:16, John records Thomas saying this. "Let us also go, that we may die with him." What he's really saying is. We're all going to die, we're all going to die. I know it. I just know it. We might as well get this out of the way." We learn from John that this is not their time.

We meet Thomas again in the Upper Room during the last supper. Jesus pours out his heart to them. He tells them he must go away. He tells them he is going to go and prepare a place for them and that he will come back for them. Jesus ends his conversation with these words. "You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas, Thomas, Thomas. He can't stand it anymore. He jumps up and burst out in frustration. "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Can't you see the look on Jesus' face. Really Thomas? Jesus response is very simple. "I am the way."

All of Thomas's fears, all of his doubts...It was like the fog cleared the minute he touched Jesus hands and side. He saw it. He really, really saw it. He saw it all! The same person who just days ago expressed his doubts now knows. This Jesus truly is Lord and God. His Lord and God.

I have had many conversations with people. Some long before I became a pastor. One of those persons might have been me. They want to talk to someone because they have a confession to make. They have doubts.

They've been carrying this burden for quite a while. Along with guilt, shame, and embarrassment. The conversation typically includes this statement. "I don't know what to do with these doubts."

What I've found, and what I've shared with others is this. Doubts are nothing to feel guilty, shameful, or embarrassed about. In fact, I believe it means you're doing the right things.

I'm going to give you all a little quiz. I'm going to give you a word, you give me the opposite. Shout out your answer when you have it.

Light Dark

Hot Cold

Open Closed

Last one...Faith (Unbelief)

Friends, I believe that the opposite of faith is not doubt. It's disbelief.

Doubt is not the absence of faith. Faith is a prerequisite for doubt. Only when you have faith can you have doubt. Doubt isn't a sign of a dying faith. It's a sign of a growing faith.

Doubt...my calling had a healthy dose of doubt. I loved working at Intuit. I loved the people I worked with and for. While I didn't have aspirations for any executive type roles. I knew I had the opportunity for positions that would be more lucrative in terms of salary, bonuses, and other perks. Funny how God works. About 6 months before this calling happened, I had a little self-calibration moment. I knew that any upward movement at Intuit would only increase the crazy number of hours I was already working. Where I was at that moment, I never worked just 40 hours a week. I often sacrificed breaks and lunches to get things done. (Excel) Did I really want more of that? I started weighing what I wanted personally in life with what the cost would be to have that. If I wasn't working the killer hours at Intuit. What would I really need to make ends meet, comfortably? Ironically the amount I came up with was what my DS told me my starting salary would be as an appointed licensed local pastor. SOLD! Except...I started having time to think. Got a few bonuses, got a few perks. Had a gut check on what I was giving up. That's when the doubts started creeping, ok pouring in. I began pushing the call away. Maybe I didn't hear that right. Maybe this isn't really for me. Maybe I'll just do this later in life. It took me being at an advent service at church of the resurrection in Kansas to hear God's words loud and clear. "Get this going, get this going right now, don't put it off any longer." It's why I stand here today.

If you struggle with doubt, why not do what Thomas did? Be honest with your fellow disciples about your doubt. That I could have done better on. But also, remain in the community of the faithful as Thomas did. That, I did. If you do these things, you can bet this. Christ can be trusted and Christ will make himself real to you in his own way.

As we move from doubt to deeper faith, we too might feel inclined to offer this pepper of praise. From deep in your soul. Say it with me as Thomas said it. My Lord and my God.

Let us pray.

Lord, let us find it within us to cling to you, our Lord and our God.

Amen

Amen.