

Trust and Doubt

But Thomas...was not with them when Jesus came. 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...I will not believe." See John 20: 19-31 for the whole story.

Suppose that one Friday an alleged criminal was executed here in N.M. although his friends maintained his innocence. He was declared dead by the medical examiner and taken to the morgue. Sunday morning there was a newsflash that the morgue was empty. The fellow had been seen at a local Denny's Restaurant. Would we say, as did Doubting Thomas, "I don't believe that!" Or would we say, "Which Denny's? I want to see this!"

There's a lot to ponder when it comes to Jesus, some of which can lead us into the realm of doubt. Doubt does have the potential to damage our faith., but on the other hand, doubt is part and parcel of our faith. What did the father who wanted Jesus to heal his son say? "I believe! Help my unbelief!" His response was a mixture of trust and doubt.

Christian writer Philip Yancey writes, "Doubt is the skeleton in the closet of faith, and I know no better way to treat a skeleton than to bring it into the open and expose it for what it is: not something to hide or fear, but hard structure on which living tissue may grow... Doubt always coexists with faith."

Flannery O'Connor also wrote, "When we get our spiritual house in order, we'll be dead. Doubt goes on. You arrive at enough certainty to be able to make your way, but it is making it in darkness. Don't expect faith to clear things up for you. (What's important) is trust, not certainty."

There are people in the gospels who have great faith. There's the Roman centurion about whom Jesus says, "Not even in Israel have I found such faith." There is the woman who believes that if she can make her way through the crowd and just touch the fringe of Jesus' cloak, she will be healed. Yet, Jesus also says, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can move mountains!"

And God helps us come up with at least mustard-seed-sized faith. God acts in our world and in our lives in ways that help us trust. What God has done, is doing, and will be doing enables us to believe. Ours is to pay attention.

Rev. William Sloane Coffin said that he wasn't there to see Jesus change the water into wine, but he could report that in home after home he had seen Jesus change beer into furniture, (as with a person who used to drink his paycheck), turn sinners into saints, hate-filled relations into loving ones, cowardice into courage, and the fatigue of despair into the buoyancy of hope. Is all of this not evidence of God's reality and presence?

It's important that everyone have the opportunity to believe in Jesus. To that end, God's activity in our lives and in our world helps us and others overcome our doubts with trust. Pay attention. There are mountains to move. – DJ

