

+WEEKLY REFLECTION

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St Thomas: A hero because he doubted

John 20: 19-end

Poor St Thomas is only ever remembered for being the disciple who doubted. So much so that we often call people today a 'doubting Thomas' when they don't believe something that's obvious to everyone else.

But Thomas is one of my heroes, precisely because he doubted. Faith that is accepted without question is not a very strong one. But a faith that is questioned is much stronger. Questioning God, can only damage our faith if He isn't real. If God does indeed exist, He will be able to withstand our questioning.

We see on many occasions though the gospel of John that Jesus is questioned. Nicodemus asks about being born again; the Samaritan woman asks about the living water; Martha questions the resurrection and even before this, Thomas has already questioned what 'the way' means.

On each of these occasions Jesus never dismisses them, or tells them to blindly believe. Instead, He listens to them and guides them to explore the issues and move to a place of belief.

Jesus is not frightened of being questioned.

Asking questions of our own faith can take us to a place of deeper understanding, just as it did for the characters we find in the Gospel accounts. Blind belief, on the other hand, will rarely withstand the test of time. When the trials of life come along, blind belief will waver because it does not have the roots of understanding.

We can and we absolutely should question our beliefs. Why do we believe what we believe? Can the Bible be trusted? Did God really exist? Was He really raised from the dead? These are tough questions – but they are not questions that we should shy away from. It is through the process of questioning we can find ourselves coming to a greater understanding of the love God has for us.

To ask questions of God is not a sign of unbelief, or a sign of weakness. It is not the case that we have to have everything sown up all neatly. Questioning, just like Thomas did, leads to a greater, stronger faith.

So Thomas is my hero because he doubted and I hope to be able, through my questioning, to be able to cry in adoration 'My Lord and My God!'

Rev Canon Anne Beverley, Director of Ministry