**‘… Just Trust’** (John 20:9-31) April 24th, 2022

When I was a little girl, my big brother was always tinkering with things and fixing things. I remember he would frequently have the engine of his Hillman Imp Car scattered across the driveway – bits and pieces of the engine lying everywhere – and as a little girl, I would say to him:

 “How does it go back together?” – and he would answer, “Just trust me!”

At other times, I remember that my mother would call upon him to fix broken appliances in the house, and he would tinker away with washers and screws, and I’d be watching on, saying:

 “Show me, show me” – and he would say “Just trust me!”

It’s not that I wasn’t trusting. In fact, I think I believed that my big brother could do anything! But like many I did have an innate need ‘to see’ in order ‘to believe.’

I suspect that many of us are like that.

Many of us are like Thomas in our scripture today.

We have often heard Thomas referred to in a dismissive way as ‘Doubting Thomas’, but I suspect that there is a little bit of Thomas in all of us.

We live in a world where we no longer take things at face value. We are encouraged ‘to see to believe’ – and you can see anything unbelievable on social media, Tick-Tok posts, YOutube and more!

* A cat barking!
* A dog driving a car!
* A hairdresser using a meat cleaver to cut hair ….

I’m not joking - The crazy list goes on and on – just go on YouTube and see for yourself.

But the point is, we live in a world where we need ‘to see to believe.’

Thomas is not alone.

Thomas just cannot believe that Jesus is alive.

He knew for sure that he had seen Jesus die.

He was very much in touch with his experience of grief. He is in deep pain.

And he is just unable to flip that around into joy.

So, even though his friends all tell him that they have seen Jesus standing right before them – still he tells them that ‘unless he sees for himself, he won’t believe.’

And I don’t think that means that Thomas has no faith.

In fact, sometimes when we question something that we are unsure of – then our faith can become deeper.

Asking questions can be good a thing.

It can be courageous to ask questions.

In our first hymn that we sung today, verse 3 says *“let the rich courage of your doubt bring you fresh belief”*

Thomas’ inability to believe at face value, is in many ways a form of discernment.

Thomas courageously asks questions.

He needs to wrestle for himself how to get this head around this news, so he can say ‘yes … I can trust.’

Nancy Reeves wrote a book with a catchy title: “I’d say Yes, God, if I knew what you wanted.” She outlines the underlying concepts of discernment, and methodologies to help anyone trust at times of uncertainty.

I am sure that many of us may have had those moments of uncertainty in our lives. Times we have had to wrestle with a decision:

a course to study, accepting a job, moving home, beginning or ending a relationship, having children … etc etc.

But sometimes we also wrestle with listening to the small moments of ‘God touches’ in our lives.

The moments where God reassures you to trust in God’s plan for you – at this time, in this moment.

Nancy Reeves defines discernment as: *“the process of clarifying and understanding God’s will for us.”* – and the ‘us’ in this definition can be as individuals, or ‘us’ as a church.

I think from the moment that Thomas was told by his friends that Jesus was alive, then he was probably in a process of discernment. He was trying to understand and trying to trust in God’s will. He probably wrestled with questions like:

How can this be true?

I don’t understand?

What do I do now?

And I imagine that not all those questions were answered for Thomas, even when he saw Jesus standing in front of him.

Jesus could clearly see that Thomas was still wrestling with trusting, so he told him:

“*Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side.”*

And when Thomas is finally able to trust, then he calls out to Jesus in submission: *“My Master! My God!”*

What does it take for us to submit to God?

What does it take for us to fully trust, even when we don’t understand?

There will be times in each of our lives when trusting God will be hard.

Times when we will be like Thomas, and the other disciples –

Times of deep grief.

Times of fear.

Times of uncertainty for our future.

Theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, wrote and preached on TRUST during the Nazi oppression. He knew firsthand what dark and difficult days looked like, and what it meant to ‘give up trusting God.’ He was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned for speaking out against Hitler's anti-Semitism. But even in prison he continued to inspire both fellow prisoners and guards, not to stop trusting God and not to give up hope. Just days before he was executed, he wrote in one of his final letters:

*“...I am so sure of God’s guiding hand, that I trust I shall always be kept in that certainty. You must never doubt that I’m travelling with gratitude and cheerfulness along the road where I’m being led.”*

75 years after his death, Bonhoeffer’s writings can still teach us about the need for trust in a post-Christian world.

There will be times in our lives, and in our community of faith when it is difficult to just trust.

But God promises that we are not alone at any of these times.

God does walk beside us, as individuals, and as a community of faith.

And God calls us to ‘just trust.’

When Jesus stands before his disciples, the first thing he says to them is *“peace be with you.”*

Jesus is not just using a colloquial greeting.

He is not referring to peace in terms of the absence of war.

No – Jesus recognizes the disciples fear, all huddled in the locked room, and he says *“Peace.”*

Perhaps in that very word, Jesus is saying:

 “Just trust ….Trust God … It’s going to be OK, if you just trust.”

This ‘Peace’ that Jesus offers, is not just for the disciples.

It is a peace that each one of us can have.

Just as Jesus breathed on his disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit, we too can be filled with that same Spirit.

And through the Spirit, we can have peace at times when it is even difficult to trust.

As you leave this place today, I encourage you to ask God to help you to open your heart to ‘just trust.’

At moments of uncertainty, like Thomas.

At moments of fear, like the disciples.

At moments when it feels like your world is turned upside down like the early believers.

…. Take a deep breath, and feel God’s Spirit of peace inside you.

And, then move forward, and trust in God.

Amen.