



Reflection by Hillarie Griggs

John's account of the appearance of Jesus to his disciples is the lectionary reading every year on the Second Sunday of Easter. This passage is a key part of the Easter narrative as it is a continuation of what happened on that first Easter Day. It highlights the importance of faith, personal experience, and the willingness to seek truth. It's also a reminder that doubt and scepticism can be a part of our faith journey. It allows us, after the wonderful Easter celebrations in church, to continue to reflect on Jesus' resurrection and its significance to us individually.

I like to think of Thomas as a man with an inquiring mind rather than just a doubter. Maybe it is because of my science background and then a career working with young children that I see asking questions not as problem but as a way of gaining more knowledge and a deeper understanding of the thing that you are questioning. Much of Jesus's teaching arose from questions he was asked. Did Thomas just need more time to answer his questions about the resurrection for himself?

Certainly Thomas did ask questions of Jesus. An example is when Jesus was talking about leaving the disciples at the beginning of chapter 14 and told them 'And you know the way to the place where I am going' it was Thomas who was honest about his level of understanding of what was being said and answered 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' I wonder how many of the other disciples thought the same thing but were too afraid or embarrassed to show their own ignorance of what they were being told. Thomas' question opened up a new conversation and allowed Jesus to continue teaching them.

There are a number of things we could learn from today's passage. One is the importance of honesty in our faith, and in our doubt. Doubt is part of growing in faith. Asking questions is good so don't be afraid to ask. The alternative is to ignore questions which can stop us growing and deepening our understanding and at an extreme can lead to an abandonment of faith. We have the choice what to do about the doubts and questions that arise as we continue to explore and grow in faith but we need to be honest about what they are and sometimes about why they have arisen at this time.

After wrestling with our questions and growing in faith and understanding we can again declare as Thomas did "My Lord and my God!" demonstrating our acceptance of Christ's lordship and divinity. During our journey of faith we may experience many times of questioning and doubt but with the help of the Holy Spirit we will continue to grow.

Another thing we can learn is how Thomas and the other disciples acted during the week between Jesus' appearances. They stayed together, talking, discussing and perhaps even arguing, but still living in community even although there were differences, of experiences and understanding. In the Church of England there has always been a wide range of views, we are after all a broad church, but we need to learn to be more gracious, generous and accepting of people with differing opinions to our own and learn to live as a community of brothers and sisters.

