

MORNING PRAYER
TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
11.09.25

How do you believe in something you cannot see, nor touch, nor feel? By faith.

Faith is an amazing thing. St. Paul tells the Hebrews that faith is “*the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen.*” Faith is the moral conviction that those things we are taught by our Lord are in fact true. We accept them without the sort of physical proof that we might require of other things. This is because of the authority we grant to the one asking us to believe.

When we are young, it is easy for us to accept things on faith, which is usually based on our unquestioned trust in our parents. So it is that as young children we believe that our parents are the most wonderful people ever to walk the face of the earth, even if it is clear to everyone else that they are not. (Of course, when we become teenagers, then for a brief period our parents become the most backward, ignorant people ever to walk the earth, but fortunately that phase doesn't usually last much beyond the observer's early twenties.)

When our parents tell us incredible stories of a “tooth fairy” who will, for reasons never really explained, give us money for a lost tooth, or of an “Easter Rabbit”, who leaves eggs and candy for children, we accept these tales on their face value, never even questioning them. Then, of course, there is “Santa Claus.”

When we come to an age when we can no longer accept such stories without some evidence, or find out that they are simply myths, it is traumatic for some to discover that they have been misled. Others try through some metaphorical twisting of language and intent to justify the telling of the tales.

There are those who, in their loss of innocence, are so traumatized that they can never again accept anything on faith. They can no longer bring themselves to believe any or anything without some sort of scientific evidence. Theirs is an angry and suspicious existence, filled with distrust of everyone and everything.

Perhaps this is why our Lord told His Apostles that only those who can hold faith as a child does, can make it into heaven: *“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”*

Children have a clear, pure, innocent faith, uncluttered and unspoiled by the experience of life. They have not had time or sad opportunity to be hardened by the lies, the deceit and the disappointments of the world.

Adults often recollect with longing and a wistful envy that innocent approach to life. “Oh, how I wish I could be young again, and be that innocent and believing again,” is a common refrain among the weary adults who watch their children. What took our innocence away? What was it that despoiled our ability to believe?

Was it that we found that those whom we trusted ultimately proved to be fallible? Was it that we figured out that those people who we believe to be all powerful were in fact as weak, and error-prone, and as human as we ourselves?

Our parents, at whom we once looked at in awe, we now see in the harsher light of the reality in which these people struggle to pay bills, fight, snore and are in all respects as fallible as we are ourselves. As we come to see their potential to fail, so we come to lose faith in them.

We are not alone in our doubts and uncertainties. Even the Apostles had trouble with their faith. Thomas, called Didymus, is known today as “Doubting Thomas” because he had a hard time believing the events surrounding the Crucifixion and Resurrection when he was told of them by his fellow Apostles. When the other Apostles told him what they had seen, he could not accept their story. When they plainly told him that they had seen the resurrected Jesus, he flatly refused to believe it: *“But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will not believe.’”*

He knew Jesus had been crucified. He knew that Jesus had been buried. Those things were within his world of experiences, and so he had no problem accepting them. But he had never known anyone to be returned to life from the dead after three days. This was beyond his experience, and beyond his ability to believe on faith.

Our Lord helped Thomas deal with his doubts: *“Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.’”*

Suddenly, Thomas was confronted with an undeniable truth and, despite his earlier disbelief, was forced to believe: “*Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God! Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.’*” In other words, “Thomas, you are blessed because you believe after having seen this. But even more blessed are those who accept this on faith.”

The Nobleman, as he is called in the King James Version of today’s Gospel—the Revised Standard Version calls him “an official” had the same problem. He wanted to see Jesus heal his son. He probably had given up on the ability of usual physicians to heal the boy, and so he turned to the only one who might be able to help. He travelled from Capernaum to near Nazareth to ask Jesus to come and see his son. Jesus told the man that the child was healed and told him to go home.

We can only imagine how hard it was for this man to accept Jesus’ word and to go home. His entire experience must have been that without direct intervention, no help could come to his child. So he started for home, and on the way he met his own servants coming to get him. When they told him that the boy was healed, he asked what time the healing had occurred.

When told that the time of the healing was the same time that he had spoken to Jesus, he could finally believe, and the Gospel tells us that he and his entire family became believers. Jesus had correctly said of him, “*Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*” Just as he would later for Thomas, Jesus provided the help to believe that the man needed.

Why was it so hard for that official, and for Thomas, and for many others, to believe what Jesus told them? It is because they have been failed so many times before. It is the same reason a child loses that in-born wide-eyed wonder at his or her parents and comes to regard them instead with the more mature eyes of a fallible human being who knows others are also fallible. But there is one who does not fail us in anyway.

Whatever question we have, He has an answer.
Whatever pain we suffer, He can offer comfort.
Whatever trouble we face, He can help us overcome.
While we might long like Thomas to see our Lord in the person, to hear His voice, see His face, and share His experiences, we know that He does not fail us, even if we do not have his physical presence with us.

This is why we can look to Him always in time of trouble. We can accept without fear of error or loss whatever He says. We can hold fast to His assurances. We can depend on Him with faith and that is all the evidence we need.

Eternal Father, we depend on You for all our lives. In times of joy and of tribulation, we know that we can turn always to You for comfort, support, guidance and grace. Keep us always mindful of Your perfect presence in our lives and Your constant assurance. This we ask in Jesus' Holy Name.

Amen.

Written by: The Rev. Mr. Larry Wagner, MSW

Presented by Lay Reader: Ted Randall