

John 20: 19 – 31

**'Doubt or Certainty?'**

**Introduction ...**

I preached on the first part of that Gospel last Sunday evening ... so if you want to know more – look in the folder of sermons or on the website.

This morning, we'll concentrate on Thomas.

I'm going to read a story written by Trevor Dennis: *(From 'Keeping God Company' p.64: Terrifying Certainties)*

*There was a knock on God's door, and Thomas came in. 'You look worried, Thomas, my friend,' God said. 'Bothered about your doubts again?'*

*'Yes, God.'*

*'But I thought we had settled all that.'*

*'Yes, we had.'*

*'Well, then?'*

*'They tell me, they still tell me that doubt is a sin.'*

*'No doubt they are entirely sure of that.'*

*'Oh yes.'*

*God flushed with anger. 'Your doubt a sin! I tell you I am terrified of their certainty! Their faith is a baseball bat, and every time they catch you in one of their dark alleys, they beat you about the head with it. They want to knock the sense out of you. They want to knock the Thomas out of you, and turn you into one of them. It's all about power, their power, though they say it's about mine. Come and sit down, and I will give you something for your poor head.'*

*God's room, with its scent of the flowers of Galilee, always reassured Thomas. God always reassured Thomas.*

*God soothed Thomas's wounds. 'You remember the battering I had,' God said. 'That was all about power too.'*

*When the work was done, and Thomas was healed once more, God got up suddenly and said, 'Come with me. I want to show you a few things.'*

*God took Thomas to an open space outside a prison. It was approaching midnight. Inside a man was being strapped tight to an ugly black contraption, ready for the injections that would kill him. He had been on death row for ten years. High on drugs he had once murdered an old woman. Now, as the moment of his own death approached, a group of men and women outside waved placards and Bibles and bawled the vengeance of their god.*

*God took Thomas to an abortion clinic. A doctor emerged from the front door and was hustled into a car by two body-guards, as in the name of God a crowd hurled their abuse. 'Hitler!' they shouted, 'Murderer! Baby killer!'*

*'They'll be shouting "Crucify him!" next, God murmured.*

*God took Thomas to the city he knew all too well, to Jerusalem, showed him the Jewish settlers strolling through the streets with their machine guns slung casually over their shoulders, stood silently with him as they shouted, 'This is OUR land! God gave it to our ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to no-one else!'*

*God took Thomas a bus ride away to the house of an archaeologist in a suburb of the city. The telephone rang. The caller did not identify himself. 'You are digging in the area of the Temple Mount,' the voice said. 'I have seen you and your people there. You are digging up the bones of our ancestors. You are defiling holy ground. The rabbis have put a curse on you all. You will get cancer and die. That will put a stop to your digging!' The telephone went dead.*

*God took Thomas to a church where a preacher of very long and very loud sermons was denouncing 'the papists' yet again. The congregation was loving it.*

*God took Thomas to a second church, where another preacher was busy pouring scorn on other religions. 'If you have a statue of Buddha, or a copy of the Koran in your home, bin them!' he was saying, and hundreds and hundreds were hanging on his every word.*

*'Would he say that to a Buddhist or a Muslim?' Thomas asked. 'Would he say that to their face?' 'I don't know,' God replied. 'He has hardly met any, nor have the people listening to him.'*

*Thomas turned away. 'I have seen enough,' he said.*

*'So have I,' said God. 'You see now why I prefer your doubts, Thomas,' she added.*

Part of accepting that 'I am human  
and God is God'  
is to accept that I may be wrong.

The opposite of doubt for us is faith not certainty.

Doubt is only an enemy of faith if we let it turn us away from God – rather than towards God with honest questioning.