

John 20:19-31

I was always glad about the story of the doubting Thomas.

Why ... easy to explain .. whenever I had my own doubts I could always say with the words of Thomas: ‘unless I see ..I will not believe’. It was my justification .. that it is ok to have doubts. And now here I am .. preaching about it! (I don’t want to go so far as to say that doubt is a prerequisite for becoming a priest ...but)

There are some strange things in our faith .. we quite quickly get to them when we profess our faith with the words of the Nicean Creed.

One God .. three natures .. three Gods?

Resurrection .. come on .. ok we always believed this .. lets not go there.

Virgin birth is another one and then it gets really interesting when we talk about miracles and gifts of the spirit

And then there was the joke about: what do we call it when we talk to God?

Yes we call it prayer .. and what do we call it when God answers or even starts talking to us .. yes we often call it schizophrenia!

By now I think it good that we have so many Christian denominations ..

It shows us that the question of faith and doubt is not an easy one.

And Christ knew this; he says 2 sentences to the topic at the end of the reading: He asks: Have you believed because you have seen me?

And: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe!

So what is it that makes us believe .. brings us to faith?

What I find most striking about this text is that in both instances:

- The apostles being behind locked doors, once without Thomas and once with Thomas – the sequence of events is the same.

It starts with people gathered .. like we here today

Next thing Jesus appears with the words: Peace be with you!

And then Jesus shows his wounds in hands and side!

The disciples rejoiced, it reads, and Thomas says: My Lord and My God.

Now this is almost the order of worship we follow here in church:

We gather here in Christ’s name.... we hear and talk about the stories

“what is going on in our faith and so on” , we exchange the peace and then

we celebrate the Eucharist .. we are getting in touch with the wounds of hands and side, we are getting in touch with body and blood of Christ.

And when we leave we are dismissed with the words:

Let us go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit!

But something is still missing here

Lets go back for a moment to the appearance of Jesus

Lets have a closer look at those wounds ... the text actually doesn't speak about wounds .. the text speaks about Marks

Jesus has been resurrected, the wounds have healed, Jesus is the Christ

So what are those Marks the text speaks about.

I don't know what the disciples and Thomas have seen ...I was not there!

What I see here are the scars, the marks, of the struggle between Love and sin, between God and evil, the marks of having gone through death into life!

The Marks of having looked and gone into the deep abyss, into what it means to be separated from God!

So what the disciples saw was the living example of the end result of all our conflicts between Love and sin, and, God and evil.

They saw this right in front of them ...

We have not seenbut we have the Spirit to open our eyes to see through and in bread and wine the Marks of God's Love for us!

Being a Christian – and Christian might be the wrong term here, the early Christians called themselves: I am of the Christ, I am possessed, owned by that Love - means to walk in that Love that showed us a way to live, to live that Love, a way to God, a way through all of our struggles, pains, tears and suffering, a way to resurrection.

To Love God with all your heart and to Love your neighbor and to Love yourself is a difficult challenge. It means change! Can we trust it?

How real is that Love .. How real is this way of Christ ... How real is God?

Will he ..she ..it carry me through?

What do we do with our doubts?

The answer is simple:with all the Love we have – may it be a lot or a little, it matters not, we bring those doubts to God .. we ask God

but please don't call it schizophrenia or crazy when the answer comes.

That Love can not - not answer!!! That Love always answers!

And with the answer two things happen: Our doubts bit by bit turn into faith and Love bit by bit increases in us! So lets not toss out the doubts .. lets bring them to God!

(- enjoy the answer!)