

## Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Matthew 28:16-20 (NT page 1001)

Sermon

The text for the sermon is: <sup>17</sup>- When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Many people today are doubting that God exists. Our reading this morning brings this “doubt” in perspective. It is not a new phenomenon. We read that when Jesus appeared to them, there were some of them who were full of doubt.

But what does “doubt” mean in its original context? And is it the same emotion that we experience?

**It comes from the Greek word διατάζω *distázō*** which can mean twice, two ways, to be uncertain, to hesitate, to doubt, waver. It is a figurative word taken either from a person standing where two ways meet and not knowing which to choose (inclining sometimes to one, sometimes to the other), or from the quivering motion of a balance when the weights on either side are approximately equal (when first one side, then the other, seems to be predominate). In our context the verb that was translated as “some doubted” should rather be translated “they hesitated”. To get the

answer to this reaction, would only be speculative. They could have hesitated because they were in shock - Jesus was now “resurrected” and talking to them. They might have wondered how it could be possible. It did not fit their current expectations of the end time: all the dead were to be raised together!

**According to Wikipedia doubt**, is a status between belief and disbelief, it involves uncertainty or distrust or lack of sureness of an alleged fact, an action, a motive, or a decision.

I think the best way to describe this feeling of doubt or hesitance is to compare it to someone who is running a race like we saw yesterday at the East Calder gala races. Runners of any race often reach the point where they wonder whether they can keep going. They hit the wall. They doubt or are hesitant in making a decision to finish the race. Their muscles burn with pain; their strength is gone. They feel defeated.

I think the same is true of our lives on this earth. Sometimes the business of this world can change our focus. Instead of running with God we think we will manage on our own. Then before long we start to doubt, waiver, hesitate about God, his church, and the essence of life. Other times ill health, broken relationships, hardship, suffering or challenges can make us to doubt whether God is still in control and whether the church on earth can really make a difference. And yes when

bad things do happen to good people, the first thing we do is to “doubt” the Wisdom of God, His grace and mercy.

The thing is in any race, there are a number of key supporters to help the runner to reach the finishing line. There is the coach who spend hours of teaching and coaching - The dieticians to make sure the runner eats the right food - the medical staff helping with the unexpected small injuries during a marathon. - the family members and friends to cheer on the runner. And there are the officials who are making sure that the runners get enough water. But after all it is up to the runner to commit him/herself fully to the successful completion of the race. He/she will not manage to complete any race successfully without any practise, hard work, commitment and sacrifice.

The same is true when we run the race of faith. We need to practise – reading our Bibles, commit ourselves to daily prayers. We need to get spiritual coaching and help which is freely available through me and the elders. We need to have a supportive spiritual family which in this case is this congregation who will not judge us when we get tired and “ready” to give up. We need other people of faith to share with us their trails and tribulation like godparents. Often we think that we are the only ones to doubt because of our own circumstances, reasoning that if we only have someone else’s life, faith and circumstances all “doubt” will disappear.

It reminds me of the great story I once heard.

There was this town who was known through the reputation of its citizens. They moaned about everything and anything. They were never satisfied with nothing and they always wanted more. So one day the local councillor issued a decree whereby he invited all the townspeople to bring one bit of clothing that they were not satisfied with - to the Marketplace. After a week with the pile of "clothing" getting higher and higher, he issued another decree whereby he invited them to come and pick from the large pile clothes that they liked. The funny thing was that everyone just took their own clothes back! Why? Well it is when we you start to look around and see that other people have much worse "clothes" than yourself, that you appreciate your own. In fact it is only your own clothes that can fit you.

Maybe it is time to look around and see that there are others that also are "hesitant" and doubtful, that it is not only me that feels this way. Maybe then we must not hide from God, his church or the world. It is then that we must go and fetch our own "clothes" or doubts and run the race of life with God, knowing that He will be with us, always and ever.

So, come, you who have much faith and you who have little, you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time, you who have tried to follow and you who have failed. Come, not because it is I who invite you: it is our Lord. It is his will that those who want him should always meet him here!

Come and let us all run the race of faith together supporting and helping one another as brothers and sisters in faith. We need to spend time with God and the spiritual family, his church on earth, we need to read his Bible as often as we can, and we need to talk to him wherever we find ourselves. And above everything else, we need to proclaim Jesus' authority on this earth above all other things through our words and deeds. If we do this, we will be able to run and finish the race of faith! And please dear congregation may the Lord help us all never to judge or exclude other people from the presence of our resurrected Lord and Saviour

Simon and Jennifer – may the Lord help you indeed to keep your promises that you made to Him. May His love guide you in raising Edward as a beacon of light in His Holy name!

Amen.