

Beloved doubters

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I remember a film about Doubting Thomas that I saw in Sunday school as a girl. It was one of a series that our church showed us: the Bible story was read while a sequence of tableaux ran on the screen—it was not a motion picture, really, but more like a slide show. The actors were all attractive people with earnest expressions, and their faces stayed on the screen for a long time while the text was read. Sometimes the camera would zoom in, so that we could get a really good, long look at a particularly earnest expression.

I think I would find it all a bit too much if I were to view it today. But this was a long time ago.

I remember Thomas's face. A cloud of discouragement covered it when he stood isolated amid his friends in the upper room--the only one left out of the amazing experience the others had. We studied that discouraged face for what seemed like forever, until the frame changed and Jesus appeared, pointing at the wound in his side with a wounded hand.

Then back to Thomas--and he was not the same man! Radiant is what he was: eyes wide, one hand reaching toward the wounded hand of Jesus. And that is how we left him, while the narrator intoned the slightly scolding last line of the story: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

For years, it was the scolding I remembered more than anything else. *Don't doubt*, the story said to me. *The really good people don't doubt*. Now, though, I see Thomas

very differently. I no longer think that this is a story told to demand unquestioning faith of us. I think it's one about a savior who came back to the upper room precisely because he knew Thomas didn't have unquestioning faith.

Jesus came back again just to find Thomas. He came to the doubter because the doubter needed him.

If we knew how beloved of God we are, the world would be a very different place. Life is not a test or a competition; it is a gift. This world is so far from being all there is that one day we will laugh with the host of heaven at the idea that we were ever limited by its sad categories. No, we don't know much of this now. Yes, we are assailed by doubt--I think this is why so many people like Thomas the Doubter.

The text says that Thomas was sometimes called "the Twin." So, Thomas had a twin--I think I know who it is. I see her in my mirror every morning.