

Doubting Thomas

The sermon this week took me back to a sad time in my life. Unlike Thomas who could not believe Jesus had rose from the dead I and so many like me could not believe a loved one was gone. We thought their presence would never be felt again. Like Thomas we were both wrong. Thomas could not believe that Jesus was risen, sometimes we cannot believe a loved one is gone. Feeling they are in another place without pain can bring us comfort but what about those who we cannot bear to part with? How do we cope with the loss. Thomas had joyful news but what of us that will never feel the comfort and love that the other person would have brought to our lives. How do we survive? For me it was knowing my brother was not far from me, I could feel him in my decisions, in my daily life. I mourned him like no one before or since. He was only 17 and had so much living to do. I was 12. This Sunday my son and I went to the cemetery. I mentioned before that I wanted to show him where his relatives on my side of the family were buried. He said he knew from when my mother and oldest brother and my Father were buried. But I felt the need to go as I sometimes do and so he took me. I looked at my brother's tombstone and felt the sadness I had been feeling lately well up inside me and my tears overflowed. It's been 76 years and yet I still miss him. He gave so much of himself to me. He counseled me and reprimanded me, and truly loved me in so many ways. When I ran away, (about once a week and more often in Summer) he was always the one who came after me and talked to me on the way home. I always knew he would come after me. He was my strength and shield from a life that seemed so hard. After the news of his death, I received a telegram, I was up north at a friend of the family's. My parents had sent me there. There was no love to you in the message just the time of the funeral arrangements. My brother was in the Army when he died and stationed in the Panama Canal, and it took almost a month for his body to come home. I was sure I would look at the body and prove to everyone that it was not him. Unlike Thomas I was sure my brother was not dead. Even a revengeful God would not do that to him or to me. Thomas saw Jesus and realized he was alive. I will one day see my brother and embrace him once again. I thought of the many times I had to call a doctor in to pronounce a patient deceased. Most of the time the family were sitting there and the looks on their faces told me that the patient had died so quietly that they did not realize what had happened and there would be an unbelieving, stunned look on their faces. Sometimes they knew but hoped that a stethoscope would prove them wrong. Letting go is hard and sometimes so quick that it is unbelievable. My husband and I were alone when he took his last breath. He simply stopped breathing. I called his name, but he was gone. He left my life as quietly as he had entered it as a young boy who asked if he could carry my books and walk me to my next class.

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed, blessed art those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Lord, we thank you for all our days and for those who have loved us. We thank you for Jesus and the love and sacrifice he has shown us. Be with us in our daily lives so that others see Jesus in us, in the way we treat others, and in our giving of ourselves and in the way we accept the good and the bad, the gains and the loss, and the ups and downs of our lives... May we live our days in your service and to your honor. Be with those who are sick and those who grieve, comfort them. Be with our Pastor, keep him and his family safe. Help us to honor him for everything he does and for his caring heart. Be with his family, keep them safe and well. Be with our leaders and workers, may all we do be in your name and honor you. May Jesus be with us in this time and in this place. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson