



****"Rethinking Your Doubts"***

Biblical Text: [Luke 24:36-41](#)

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*This week was graduation week at a lot of area High Schools and Colleges. But there is a lot of life beyond graduation! There is a lot of life beyond every transition!

It was that way the first Easter also. We've been looking at the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in Luke 24 in our series.

*We've looked at the stories of the women, the disciples, and "average disciples" at Emmaus. In our text today, the disciples are discussing all that happened, trying to make sense of it all.

Frederick Buechner says, ***"I don't know of any story in the Bible that is easier for us to imagine ourselves into than theirs."***¹

We sometimes struggle with what it means to believe. My mentor, Dr. Charles Merrill Smith, taught me: ***"Mike, people want to hear what you believe, not what you don't believe."***

So, for more than forty years I have been talking about what I believe. But the truth is, from time to time, after *fifty-plus* years as a Christian, I still doubt. My guess is we all do. Admitting that out loud doesn't mean we don't have faith. Not at all.

There is room in honest faith for doubt. Fredrick Buechner said this: ***"If you don't have any doubts, you are either kidding yourself or asleep. Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith."***²

Don't you love that? Doubt is a part of faith. I'm guessing there's not one of you here today who hasn't, at some point, whispered in the secret places of your soul: ***"Is it really true?"***

¹ "The Seeing Heart," *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*, by Frederic Buechner. Copyright © 2006, HarperOne.

² Fredrick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*, Copyright © 1978, first edition by Harper and Row Publishers.

*That's what is underneath our Bible text today. The disciples were struggling with news that seemed too good to be true.

And I believe our struggles and doubts are often part of how we give God permission to find us. And that's the Good News.

God takes us as we are, doubts and questions and all. I have often said it this way: **"Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, even if it's nowhere at all, you are welcome here."*

And I mean it. I know, in our text in Luke 24:38, Jesus asked his disciples, **"Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts?"*³ But as I read the text, he was not so much condemning them for having doubt, but inviting them to explore their doubts with him. He still invites us to do so!

Maybe it is how I was raised. My folks kept a big *unabridged dictionary in our parlor. Every time I asked what a word meant, my father would say, **"Look it up for yourself."*

My mother also encouraged us to ask questions to explore our doubts. But she never let moments of doubt keep us from attending Church. *That simply was not an option!

She had much in common with the advice given by Moravian missionary Peter Böhler to a young, struggling *John Wesley, who asked, in effect, *"How can I preach, if I have doubts?"*

Böhler answered by saying, **"Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith."*⁴

That's not the same as *"Fake it till you make it."* Practicing the faith is how we work through questions and struggles. And I believe we meet God more deeply in the midst of the process.

³ Luke 24:38, [New Revised Standard Version Bible](#), Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁴ John Wesley, [The Journal of John Wesley](#), his entry for Mar. 4, 1738. This edition Copyright © 1960, Chicago: Moody Press.

During my ministry in Wichita one of my favorite things was to preach at the *Coffeehouse service on Sunday nights. On one of those Sunday nights, I had a ***"Your Questions, Please"*** night.

Near the end, a young woman asked, ***"Dr. Mike, I know you have faith in God, but honestly, do you ever doubt?"*** My answer was short and simple. ***"Yes! Of course I do."***

Doubt itself is not sinful or wrong. It can be the catalyst to new spiritual growth. Our doubts seem to fall into three categories:

*First, there are intellectual doubts raised by those outside the Christian faith. Does God Exist? Ala Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens and others who claim atheism.

*Second, there are spiritual doubts. These tend to be the doubts of those inside the church. Am I really a Christian? Have I truly believed? Why is it so hard to pray? Why do I feel guilty?

*Third, there is circumstantial doubts. Why did my child die? Why did my marriage end? Where was God when I need him? These are often the toughest doubts of all for us!

*Sometimes people think doubt is the opposite of faith. **It isn't.** Unbelief is the opposite of faith. You can doubt and still believe

*Sometimes people think doubt is unforgivable. **It isn't.** God is big enough to handle all our doubts and all our questions.

Look at Luke 24:41 in our text. It says. ***"In their joy they were still doubting and wondering."***⁵ That gives me hope that joy and doubt can coexist in our lives today.

I think that above the front door of every church in the world, we should put a two-word sign that says ***DOUBTERS WELCOME.**

⁵ Ibid. Luke 24:41.

If you have doubts, come inside.
If you have questions, come inside.
If you are a skeptic, come inside.
If you are searching for truth, come inside.

God never turns an honest doubter away. Never. I believe He welcomes our hardest questions. *Doubt is not a sin. It's what we do with your doubt that makes all the difference. And what honest believers do with honest doubt is bring it to the Lord.

Again I love the wisdom of Fredrick Buechner. He says:

**"Faith is not so much believing this or that as it is hearing a voice which says, 'Come unto Me.' A hand is there, and we take it."*⁶

Let us pray.

⁶ Frederick Buechner, [The Magnificent Defeat](#). Copyright © 1966, Seabury Press; First Edition.