

# I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For

The Rev. Rob Shearer + A Sermon for Every Sunday + Low Sunday 2025 - April 12 2026 + John 20: 19-31

When I was about 14 years old, a song came on the radio – I can still remember it on that lo-fi AM radio channel - CKOC in Hamilton Ontario Canada – playing through my little alarm clock speaker...

And I hope you will bear with me, but the second verse went something like this:

*You broke the bonds and you loosed the chains  
carried the cross and all my shame. All my blame. You know I believe it.  
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for.*

The songwriter called it “a gospel song with the restless spirit” and what it did, at least for me, was to tether together this beautiful, almost creed-like statement of faith “you.. carried the cross and all my shame...” - and married that to a very palpable sense of unfinished uncertainty and doubt – “but yet I’m still running – for I still haven’t found...”.

Some 35 plus years later, I confess that I am still living in that whole tension of faith and unsettledness. And I imagine that, if we’re honest, that at least some days of the week - most of us do.

This Sunday, the first Sunday after Easter, is sometimes called Low Sunday. And it’s a good one for those of us who wrestle with doubt. I’ve come to love how our liturgical calendar builds in a counterpoint to follow our most joy-filled festivals. After Christmas, we have the massacre of the innocents. Just a week ago we joyfully celebrated the resurrection. All the certain wonder of “Christ is risen! he is risen indeed hallelujah!”

But today, in the aftermath of it all, we have a different tone: “*I won’t believe... unless*” we hear Thomas say. Now – this, this is a moment in our sacred story of a community living in calamity, trauma and the collapse of hope. The worst has happened. Then into their locked room, in walks, well - guess who?

I do love this story of Thomas, always read this Sunday after Easter - and how it reminds us that, even in the glow of the resurrection, Jesus honours our tough and difficult questions and even our skepticism. I love how it reminds us that the wounds of Christ’s trauma are still present, even in the resurrected body. And I love that it reminds us that, no, this is not a ghost story – for the storyteller makes a point to emphasize that Jesus has real, touch-able flesh and still bears the wounds he received.

And I love how Thomas' curiosity reveals a deep desire to know. For not having the benefit of having yet seen Jesus, he says to the group: "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

So here we have it – the patron saint of skeptics and those seeking quantifiable data. For me, as a part-time doubter with a restless spirit - I love that. *[pause]*

But I also think that there's a danger for us here – and especially for those of us in more progressive traditions of the church. Even as we honour the curious and even skeptical questions, I think we need to be careful to not enshrine doubt.

Indeed, we should not forget that doubt can be a painful and hard place to be stuck. And so, even as we honour the holy skepticism and tough questioning, we as God's beloved community, who, like Thomas, haven't yet seen the evidence firsthand, also call ourselves and others toward a sense of mysterious belief and an encounter with the risen Christ and even affirm just who he is for us. "...blessed are they who haven't seen and yet believe!" That's all of us, folks.

The first days after the resurrection are filled with encounters of Christ meeting folks in their trauma. The women at the tomb – here, the disciples locked, cowering, in their fearful room, and those two dejected stragglers on the Road to Emmaus. And each time Jesus enters and the encounter changes everything.

Most of us have felt at least a taste of that kind of fear in our lives. "Put your finger here and see my hands." Jesus tells Thomas. "Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

For this is a resurrection story. And as difficult as that holy resurrection mystery might be for some of our western, post-Copernican minds, the church has suggested – and this text underlines it - that resurrection is about the real flesh; it's about cellular re-constitution; where that which once was dead, and even decaying, has come back to life. As that great preacher Otis Moss III puts it – it's resurrection, not resuscitation!

And even better yet, it's a foretaste to our own hope - where and all the pain and sorrow and trauma and hurt will be shed off into a new and glorious fleshy physicality – no - not to deny or lose our scars, nor to discard our bodies - but bear to them whole and anew in a victory over death and violence and empire.

And this fleshy element is important because it reminds us that our bodies in all their diversely-shapen forms are so good and beautiful. We are not a disembodied people. It reminds us that matter, the world, the earth, the stuff we can touch and see and feel – even the wounds - are blessed; and not something to be merely disregarded or disposed of... but to be honoured and cared for. "Do not doubt, but believe."

Years ago, I got to see the Rev. Jeremiah Wright preach. Back then he was the pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, an amazing afro-centric church, as some of you know.

Rev. Wright who is preaching in his classic black church style, when he shared that he was often asked by denominational bureaucrats the secret of why Trinity United Church grows. His answer, he said, was simple: "I preach Christ crucified, risen and coming again." ...and he continued the story: "But they say to me – sure, but what's your technique?" And he said to them – didn't you understand: "I preach Christ crucified, risen and coming again!"

I love that authority and confidence. Some days I think we all could use a bit of that. And indeed, our story today ends not with doubt, but with faith that comes with a blessed assurance as the old hymn says. The very purpose, the writer tells us, is to remind us that "Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."

But there's trouble here. Now, for those of us who struggle – perhaps because we've been bludgeoned with an idea of right belief, this is hard. And I do wonder whether we might pivot that word 'belief' to trust – for belief is about the head – whereas trust is about our whole beings; bodies, minds and spirits. Do not doubt – but trust.

"...through believing – through trust - you may have *life in his name.*" And Lord knows we all need some new life in these days where death seems like it could have the final say.

This, friends, is the urgency of the gospel – but individually and collectively. I mean, let's be realistic about where we're at as a culture, as a church and as a planet. Do I need to say the words: fascism (let's just call it what it is), the collapse of liberal democracy, genocides, the cultures of death seem to be having their days.

And then, into the fear, the hurt, the doubt - I just love how, in this short reading today, Jesus says "Peace be with you" not once or twice, but three times.

Peace be with you. Be sent. Receive the Spirit. And forgive... he tells those in that time. And it is that peace to which we are called to be aware of, God's presence and peace - amidst the collapse.

And yes, on this plane, we'll always live in that tension of faith – the assurance of things hoped for – and some of us with a curious skepticism in our unknowing.

"My Lord and my God!" Thomas shouted. And we, in our Easter moment, we shout it as well. And then, maybe like Leonard Cohen, we look at the evidence and feel we need to sing our cold and a broken hallelujah – or add a "but I still haven't found what I'm looking for" after our faith-filled assertion.

And when we do, we might somehow still trust. We trust that God honours both our faith and our uncertainty, yet still calls us into an encounter with the God of love and grace who risked humanity, overcame the forces of violence and death and who we believe, in time, will renew all of creation.

It's a huge and audacious story of cosmic proportions. But sometimes, in the chaos and hurt of our lives it's just enough to hear those simple words.

Peace be with you. Be sent. Receive the Spirit. Forgive.

In times of chaos and collapse – in our doubts and fears - we hear Jesus' words "Peace. Peace be with you."

So, beloved siblings! Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

You know I believe it.

But I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

*Amen.*