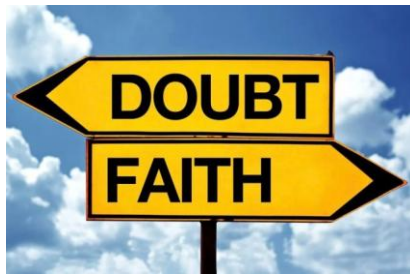


Sunday 3rd May 2026

Sermon Outline and Housegroup notes.

John 14:1-14 Acts 7:51-end



Doubt + Faith

At first glance one reading appears to be about doubt, and the other about faith, and like the signposts, 'doubt' is pointing left [original meaning being sinister] and 'faith' pointing right [original meaning 'dextrous'] implying that doubt is considered to be detrimental to faith.

But Jesus knew his disciples [although he appeared to be very frustrated with their lack of understanding at times] and trusted that there would come a time when all would become clear to them.

After Pentecost

And that's what did happen when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all the disciples – they were given the power and the understanding to do all that was required of them. Stephen, a co-worker in the early church, was reminded of many incidents in the Old Testament that he could use to explain to the Sanhedrin that, by accusing him of blasphemy, they were doing exactly as their forefathers had in persecuting the prophets.

Asking Questions

Thomas, after he had encountered the risen Jesus was the first of the disciples to acknowledge that Jesus was Lord and God. And Philip later became an evangelist and was given the opportunity to explain the meaning of a passage in Isaiah to the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading aloud from it on his journey. But even before Jesus was crucified, he answered their questions and we hear in John's Gospel how Thomas and Philip kept striving to understand by asking questions.

Empowered to serve

Each of these followers of Jesus used their knowledge of Jesus, their knowledge of the Old Testament and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to speak boldly and do the tasks set out for each of them [and also, in Stephen's case, to be able, , to ask for his tormentors to be forgiven: ["Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Acts 7:60 as his Lord had done at His cruel death "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34]

What can we do?

I doubt I could do what Stephen did, but we never know how we will respond when we are faced with challenges. I think, perhaps, I am more like Thomas, or Philip – or even Saul – just looking on. How about you? It's OK to have doubts – as it can lead to faith - just keep asking questions. In the meantime, remember Proverbs 3:5-6:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and lean not on your own understanding.*

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.

Questions for housegroups:

- 1 Is there anything in the passage or from the sermon or the service that you would like to discuss?
- 2 Which of the characters in our readings do you identify with most?
- 3 How well do you know your Old Testament? What could we do to help you know it better?
- 4 What ways have you or others found to share Bible stories with your children/grandchildren?
- 5 What was the one thing you most remember about the service or the sermon this week?

Pam Davis