

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

We are so quick to label him “doubting,” but Scripture never does. Instead, John tells us that he is Thomas, who was called the Twin.

We don’t know why he’s called the Twin. Maybe Thomas was, biologically, a twin and had a brother—or a sister—just like him. Some interpreters suggest that Thomas is Jesus’ “twin”—always wanting to imitate the Lord, even once offering to die with him (John 11).

But I think Thomas is called the Twin because he’s the kind of person who needs a buddy, who doesn’t do well without someone at his side. I think Thomas is called the Twin because he needs to do things with a partner, with others.

Because twins are about there being *more than one*. Twins are a set. They can be identical—exactly the same between the two—or twins can be complimentary—think of the “evil twin” or “long-lost twin” motifs. But either way, there is a **completeness** to being a twin: you are part of a set, a pair, a unit. Being a twin comes with a sense of greater wholeness, *but only when you’re with your twin*. If there is only one, they are incomplete.

With his label as the Twin, but without an identifier for his other twin, Thomas presents this **incompleteness**.

Our English translation loses the nuance in the original Greek of Christ's words to Thomas. Jesus doesn't call him doubting, but **unbelieving**. Jesus' words to him, "Do not doubt but believe," could be better rendered as "Do not be **un**believing but be believing."

Thomas' belief, you see, is like his status as a twin: it is **incomplete**. In John's gospel, the words "believing" and "unbelieving" go together: they are, in a sense, *twin words*: a pair of terms signifying whether someone is in or out of relationship with Jesus and his followers. So, if Thomas is "**un**believing," he is separate, and alone. Thomas is unbelieving; he is left hanging on his own.

In twin terms, this makes Thomas one of an incomplete pair. And if he is the **un**believing twin, then he needs a **believing** twin to help complete his belief. He needs, in a phrase, a faith-twin.

But who? Where will Thomas find a faith-twin who will help complete his belief? He will find them in the fellowship of disciples gathered in the house.

By welcoming Thomas in his unbelief, these believing disciples function as Thomas' complimentary faith-twin. They gather—both those who can say, "I have seen the Lord!" and those who demand, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands . . . I will not believe"—together, creating a sense of greater

wholeness in witness of and approach to Christ's resurrection. These disciples complete Thomas' belief by proclaiming what he cannot say, or cannot say yet.

And there is more than one faith-twin for Thomas the Twin. There is an assembly of disciples who worship, witness, and wait with him, who stand by him and believe when he cannot or what he cannot, so that he is not left alone and incomplete in his belief.

But Thomas' incompleteness of belief and need for a faith-twin is not unique to him. It is part of the life of faith for ALL of God's people, at every level of the life of the faithful.

We see the need for faith-twins in the life of our assembly, when today, a week after Easter, we gather to be a fellowship of believers in the house. Some among us might feel like Thomas: incomplete in our belief, not certain of the Resurrection until we see it or feel it for ourselves, not sure of where we stand in our faith, or even if we have it anymore. And then some among us might feel rather content in our belief, reassured by the glorious news of Easter, enlivened by Christ's rising. And then there are some who are not here at all, absent after last week's well-attended worship.

Together, we help complete one another's faith: unbelievers need believers, and those firm in faith need those on shaky ground, like Thomas needed his twins in faith. But let us not forget that the disciples also needed Thomas. *In our case, the individual needs the assembly, but the assembly also needs each*

individual. Those of us content and reassured need the doubters and the skeptics to get a complete experience of faith in Christ, and our experience of Easter would not have been complete had we not welcomed so many “extra” people last week to hear the Good News of the empty tomb.

Yes, Thomas’ incompleteness of faith is part of the life of faith for ALL of God’s people, not just in the assembly, but also in the life of individual believers. We see this in Trixie’s baptism today. Just a few minutes ago at the font, the Holy Spirit invited her to touch the Risen Lord through the water we poured on her head. But Trixie cannot confess the faith for herself. She literally cannot say, “My Lord and my God!” And while all the grace she needs comes from God in the water, her proclamation of belief is still, like Thomas’, somewhat incomplete.

So Trixie, like any baptized individual, **needs others to help complete her belief.** She needs a faith-twin or more: disciples to stand by her and believe when she cannot and what she cannot, so that she is not left alone or incomplete in her faith.

Because Trixie cannot believe on her own, we stand around the font with her and reject sin and confess the creed for her so that she may be inscribed in the circle of believing. The community, the fellowship gathered in the presence of Christ completes her belief.

Thomas the Twin teaches us that in this journey of believing, we cannot be whole alone by ourselves. It is together, in the psalmist's good and pleasant unity, that the Spirit completes us and completes our belief and brings us to fullness of life.

Thomas may not have been a biological twin, and very few of us here are. But I bet if we take a moment, we can call to mind a faith-twin or two. Someone who helped or helps us believe when or what we cannot. Someone whose faith paired or pairs with our doubt. Someone who proclaims the Lord's death and resurrection for us. Someone who was present when we were absent, or someone whose absence, speechlessness, doubt, or wavering belief we complete. For even if we say, "Oh, I don't really have anyone," and think we are just a singleton amidst faith-twins, we deceive ourselves, because this sense of incompleteness actually shows that we are in the right community, with people who long to and do make one another complete.

Because it is in fellowship with one another, in fellowship with God, that our joy and our faith and our very selves may be complete. Believer waiting with unbeliever. Faithful worshipping with doubting. Elder speaking for infant. Faith-twins paired together. That is how we walk in the light. That is how we come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and through believing we have life together in his name.

AMEN.