

Special Guest
@AJSwoboda
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SERMON NOTES:

Special Guest Dr. AJ Swoboda looked closely at the topics of "Doubt and Deconstruction" through the story of the Disciple historically known as "Doubting Thomas" in John 20:24-31

- How Thomas' story is our story in many ways
- Our cultural moment asks us: "Where is God in all this stuff going on around us?!"
- **AJ stated that he believes God knew we'd need Thomas' story right now:**

1) Thomas goes through Doubt

- Despite miraculous Thomas experienced with Jesus: He Doubts
- He noted that doubt is not the absence of experiencing God.
- Yet, we are prone to have very short memories of God's work in the past

He asked: *Are Doubt & Deconstruction Bad?*

- We must ask another Question in-return: **Why** are we deconstructing?
 - Some doubt and deconstruct out of a desire to know God more truly
 - Some are trying to do away with fake Christianity.
 - Are we willing to follow Jesus through anything, not propping up fake Christianity?
- There is also a very dangerous form of deconstruction
 - Many doubt and deconstruct because they are tired of having a bible that tells them how to live.
 - Its dangerous to doubt and deconstruct because we want to do what we want to do
 - CS Lewis: "wrath is when God gives us what we want...To worship God is to say to God 'thy will be done' and wrath is when God says to us 'thy will be done!'"
 - God will let you run until you wake up one day and say "I really want to go home."
- Doubt can be a legitimate place to meet the living God

2) Thomas Trusts in the Wrong Way:

- "I will believe IF..."
 - Thomas went from trusting in Jesus to trusting in "the evidence"

- Doubt is not the absence of faith, it is placing faith in something else.
- "Any act of science is a series of faith decisions" Michael Polanyi
- Not that Thomas doesn't believe in Jesus anymore, but that he believes in himself.
 - Tempted by "Did God really say...." -from The Serpent in the Garden of Eden
 - "The first doctrine that the devil denies is the doctrine of judgment" -D.A. Carson
 - Echo of the serpent is "don't trust God, trust yourself"
- Thomas has ceased having faith in Jesus, and has it in himself.
 - The greatest threat to trusting in Jesus, is trusting in ourselves

Instead, we are called to have faith in Jesus

- Most liberating thing to not have to trust in yourself, but in Jesus instead.
 - **3) Thomas Worships**
 - Thomas declares "My Lord and My God"
 - Thomas worships in the middle of his doubt!

Communally:

- "Jesus sometimes lets us stew in our doubts" -Dallas Willard
- The believing disciples made room for a whole week for a doubting disciple
- Thomas was transformed through Jesus meeting him in his doubts

Do you struggle with doubt? You might just be a missionary in preparation!

- **Bring** your doubts to Jesus!
- **Embrace** The Doubter's Prayer: "I believe, help me overcome my unbelief!"
- **Embrace** The Thomas Path: A way to question your faith without losing it

Supplemental Study: "Going Deeper"

Read Mark 9:14-29. Zero in on the interaction between Jesus and the boy's father in verses 22-24. How do you approach Jesus with an expectation of his being limited to heal whatever doubts, questions, or challenges you face? Where would Jesus said "If you can?" to your expectation of Him being incapable, uncaring, or unwilling to change your life? Why is that? What is contributing to your doubts? How can you bring them to Jesus? What did he do when you took this time to bring your doubts to Him in sincere, present, prayer?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Small Group & Personal):

WARM-UP: “Together” *(use one or none)*

1. Do you have a favorite mystery novel, movie, TV show, game etc.?
2. What is one irrational existential crisis that you’ve found yourself in?

WORD: “Truth”

Leader: Questions below should allow for quick responses, evident by close reading of the text. Choose to use some or all of them (pending pace), as reading of the passage(s) will answer them as well.

- **Sermon Recap:** Dr. AJ Swoboda invited us to consider the role of doubt and deconstruction in our life through the story of “doubting Thomas” in John 20:24-31. He showed how Thomas’ journey went from 1) Doubting TO 2) Trusting in the wrong things TO 3) Worshiping in Jesus again as “My Lord, and My God.” AJ asked us “why” you may be doubting and deconstructing, and said that the value of doing so is predicated on that question. He showed how Jesus welcomes our questions and through them sends us out to be missionaries after we cease trusting in ourself and understand that He is the source of the answers we are looking for.

- **Read the following together as a group:**

- a. Read John 20:24-31

Introduce or refresh SOAP to your group, then read the text and lead them through.

S- Scripture: Read the text

O- Observations: What stood out, what makes you curious, what questions do you have

A- Application: How does it or a part of this scripture speak to your life? What are the implications? Where do I relate? Where do I find myself? What is convicting?

P- Prayer: Pray the text in your own words, pray about what resonated with you, pray regarding your application...

APPLICATION: “Life”: *(use the below question(s) or what comes from reflection on readings)*

1. In what areas is God calling you to question that you might further meet/know Him?
2. In what areas are you doubting God because you are resisting His truth and will?

PRAYER “Truth” *(options of how to pray in your group)*

1. Ask God to help provide discernment in doubt that moves us towards him and away from him.
2. Any other specific prayer requests? How can we support you in the questions you have?

COMMUNION “Together”

Lead your group in communion in a way that feels right.

- If needed, 1 Corinthians 11:23-27
 - **23** ...that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS at ASC:

1. AJ's new book: "After Doubt: How to Question Your Faith without Losing It"
 - a. Purchase a copy for \$5 via Venmo (@aseattlechurch) or ASC App

2. **In-Person Weekly Services begin on May 9th.**
 - Let us know your plans and perspective by completing our survey [HERE](#)
 - Let us know how you want to help serve via info@aseattlechurch.com
 - 1st In-Person Gathering on May 9th

3. **All-Church Prayer Calls:**
 - a. Wednesday's from 1230-1pm each week. 1-253-215-8782, 86546382360#
 - b. Friday Mornings from 6:30am-7am 1-253-215-8782, 86546382360#

4. **Serve!** If you are interested in helping at church, we have several opportunities for you:
 - a. **Hospitality:** Help serve our production team when they record on Sundays
 - b. **Kids Ministry:** Help with serving our kids starting this Easter Sunday
 - c. **Media:** Are you a photographer, a writer, editor or graphic designer, sound engineer, we have an opportunity for you to volunteer your gifts and talents. Email info@aseattlechurch.com and Amanda will connect you with the right ministry leader.

5. **Share testimony** of how God is moving in your life/your group in this season? [HERE](#)

6. How can we **come alongside you** in more specific ways as a church? [Let us know.](#)