



Our two oldest children are boldly venturing through the asking “Why?” phase, and evidently, everything seems to be fair game: from trying to clarify the social norms to why we need a massive stockpile of batteries as they keep on touching every single button imaginable on any toy or device throughout the house over and over again, not to mention wondering why could it possibly be that their favorite food is not ready instantaneously on the first sign of their hunger. They just want to know how their own little precious corner and even the entire world operates

the way it does, as if their parents have it all figured out anyway. Yes, it’s cute and adorable for a while, but supposedly patience remains a virtue as the wise and expert big kid adults have said over the generations.

However, I could have sworn that I always heard from those supposedly wisest and expert adults, including those who ventured through the whole parenting thing themselves; that they always lifted up this precious child-like faith. That they always insisted there were these miraculous children out there who didn’t ask questions, took everything at face value, didn’t wonder out loud “Why?” about anything, and never pushed back when their parent said, “Because I said so.” And that it somehow, somehow, carried over to the church as well. That they didn’t ask interrogating questions about Scripture, they didn’t have to know why they did this or that on a Sunday morning, and of course, most importantly, whatever the big guy in the robe said up front, was just the way it was supposed to be. Miraculous children those must have been during those “good ‘ole days.”

And yet the “Why’s,” somehow, somehow, are getting asked relentlessly, including on this day when Thomas gets lifted up front and center, a week after arguably the most important day in the entire church calendar year. And perhaps, it is absolutely perfect timing to do so. Because I would not be at all surprised if some questions were asked several days ago, and maybe not all of them out-loud for someone else to hear. Some might have wondered how could someone rise from the dead anyway? Why would an almighty all-powerful God wish to venture into human mortality? And is this love, this grace, this mercy that the church lifts up over and over again: is it really for absolutely everyone? Or do you need to be like the miraculous children from history who just took it all at face value and did not question any of it?

So yes, Thomas needs to be brought front and center today. Thomas needs to ensure that every child of God feels a sense of holy safety to ask the questions, and not just in their soul, not just to God in prayer, but out-loud in the pews, in the Sunday school rooms, in the youth groups, in the Bible studies, in the hallways, in the homes and everywhere in between. Every child of God must feel as if asking “Why?” means you have a curiosity, you have an interest, you have a desire to know more about the inner-workings of the world that God still so adores, and you yearn to even have a little more understanding about this God insisting on being part of human life, and you will not just take the grace and the mercy at face value, because it is far too powerful to just leave it at that.

And it is not just Thomas for whom we are most thankful for today. Instead, for the children of God who wanted to grasp how this whole Bible thing came to be: they heard how for the longest time these stories were verbally passed along before they were ever written down,

and through each re-telling, through each future writing down, they all had an opportunity to take this story out of circulation. They all had the chance if they thought this whole Thomas desire for a little more re-assurance could lead to too many children of all ages developing faith by asking questions, if they thought it might lead to too much upheaval with lively discussions, if they wondered if the future of Jesus' followers would be thrown into utter chaos if people asked, "Why?" about all this love and grace and mercy of God somehow, someway, brought to us in our own precious corners of the world. They all had a chance over and over again to ensure that none of us would ever know this story. But they didn't. They knew it must be shared. They knew that Thomas provided the most holy opening to all children of God to feel as if they could ask, "Why?" because we cannot take any of this for granted.

But back to those two children of ours on the home front: I would be lying if I told you that many of the "Why?" questions re about the Divine and the meaning of life or anything other-worldly of sorts. But they have asked about these little Nativity blocks we have, that are just painted-on Mary and Joseph and a shepherd and a magi and a couple sheep and a baby with a halo over his head. As with many of their "Why?" questions, I'm not always satisfied with my responses, but I suppose those blocks just come down to the Gospel. "Well, God loves you too much to want to ever leave you alone." And I suppose that same Gospel applies to Thomas, in his fear and worry and anxiety of what his and the whole world's life means after a cross and a tomb, "Well, God loves you too much to want to ever leave you alone, even when you're thoroughly frightened." And I think that Gospel applies to all those last week who weren't so sure they were allowed to question anything that happened, and those who still aren't so sure if they can ever question God or the church or Scripture. Yes, you are more than encouraged to ask, and even if the church does not always respond with love and grace and mercy, God will more than fill in for that, because well, God loves you far too much to ever leave you alone, even when you're not so sure where you stand on any of it. Because all of this is far too powerful to just accept it at face value. There's too much power to not want to dig in even further with all the holy curiosity we have to give. And yes, all along the way, Christ will still be risen indeed. And for that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!