

I love magicians. They blow my mind. At the same time as being utterly amazed, my mind is racing in doubt, trying to work out how they did, there just must be a rational answer. Both Karl and I will have long conversations into how we think they did it, convinced that it is not real magic but rather skilled sleight of hand, misdirection, and illusion.

Whenever an audience attends a magic show, the magician relies on them, the spectators to suspend their disbelief and willingly enter into a state of faith. This faith is essential for the enjoyment and appreciation of the performance, as it allows the spectator to engage with the magic on its own terms,

marvelling at the seemingly impossible feats performed by the magician.

But, the magician does not expect that suspension of doubt to be a permanent feature, for once the magic has been performed, it is the existence of doubt that elevates the mystery and wonder of the trick. Disbelief, doubt and scepticism also play a role in the experience of magic, in fact a skilled magician will play with the boundary between faith and doubt very closely, blurring the lines between what is possible and what is impossible, prompting spectators to question their assumptions about the world and their own senses. In doing so, magicians inspire wonder, curiosity, and a

sense of awe that transcends the confines of rational explanation and the nature of reality.

So, what am I saying here about the resurrection of Jesus? Let me first be clear about what I am NOT saying. I am NOT saying that God is a magician, and the resurrection of Jesus was a magic trick.

What I am saying, is that faith and doubt are two intertwined concepts that often coexist within the human experience, this has been true throughout history and is particularly true in matters of belief, spirituality, and religion.

And the effects of the two put side by side, as we see in the disciples in the bible passage we heard, lead to a new understanding, a sense of awe that transcends the confines of rational

explanation and the nature of reality as was once thought to be.

Faith can be understood as a strong belief or trust in something or someone, often without the need for empirical evidence or proof. In religious contexts, faith typically involves belief in a higher power, divine being, or spiritual truth. It encompasses a deep sense of conviction, commitment, and reliance on something beyond oneself.

Doubt, on the other hand, refers to uncertainty or skepticism regarding beliefs, ideas, or concepts. It involves questioning or challenging

assumptions, seeking clarity, and grappling with ambiguity. Doubt can arise from various sources, including intellectual inquiry, personal experiences, or conflicting information.

While faith and doubt may seem contradictory, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, many people experience both faith and doubt at different times and to varying degrees in their spiritual journey. But in the passage, we heard of the risen Jesus appearing amongst his friends, faith and doubt can also co-exist. They can be present, at the same time, each holding the other, in what we might call a liminal space. A threshold where we can't go back but only entering into the new reality.

Doubt is a natural aspect of faith. It is through questioning and wrestling with doubts that we deepen our understanding, our beliefs and grow in faith. Let's not forget that faith also very often involves a conscious decision to trust in something greater than oneself, even in the face of uncertainty or doubt. It requires courage, humility, and openness to embrace beliefs that transcend rational understanding. Faith is not about the absence of doubt but rather the willingness to continue believing and seeking meaning despite doubts and uncertainties.

Striking a balance between them involves acknowledging and embracing both aspects as integral parts of the human experience.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is considered the most important event in our Christian faith. And yet, on that first Easter day, we are told that “they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

The disciples didn't understand what was going on.

Doubt is a theme that accompanies the Easter story. The disciples, who had followed Jesus closely during his ministry, struggled to comprehend and accept the reality of his resurrection. Even though Jesus had foretold

his resurrection, they followers found it difficult to believe until they personally encountered the risen Christ.

The Gospel accounts depict instances of doubt among the disciples. For example, Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, famously expressed his skepticism about Jesus' resurrection, stating that he would not believe unless he saw the nail marks in Jesus' hands and put his fingers into the wounds. Jesus later appeared to Thomas, inviting him to touch his wounds, which led Thomas to proclaim, "My Lord and my God!"

The presence of doubt in the Easter narrative serves to highlight the humanity of the disciples



and their struggle to comprehend the miraculous events unfolding before them. It also emphasises the importance of faith and trust in the face of uncertainty.

Despite witnessing Jesus' miracles during his ministry, the disciples struggle to believe that he has truly risen from the dead. In these intimate moments we see Jesus encouraging them to dispel their doubts by showing them his physical form, inviting them to touch him and even eating food in their presence to demonstrate his corporeal existence. Jesus using them as opportunities not to scold or insist they do better, but rather to demonstrate God's compassion and patience, providing them reassurance and guidance as their faith is strengthened through him.

As the Easter victory unfolds before them, we see their doubts transformed into unwavering conviction, and they become bold witnesses of the risen Christ, spreading the message of salvation to the world.

For me, this, and all the other risen encounters of Jesus illustrate that doubt is a natural part of faith, that without them we become closed off to new possible, impossibilities of God.

Without, doubt, we are in danger of closing ourselves off to be continually transformed by God.

Something amazing, world changing, life changing happened on that first Easter day, it

was an event that changed the world. But our world is still in need of realising the victory of resurrection, our world is still broken and in desperate need of transformation, hope, and reconciliation.

The resurrection is not just something that happened to Jesus in the past. As we see in the gospel's it becomes a collective experience that includes, faith, doubt, meeting, touching, conversing and eating. It looks to our future as well as the past. If our easter faith really matters, doubt is essential. We need to question the realities of the world and where resurrection is still so desperately needed. And like the disciples, in faith and doubt we must be moved to a place of proclamation, people

sharing the hope of God in the risen Christ who has the power to break down hatred and injustice so that those who need it the most may find hope and assurance in the promise of new life that Easter represents, even in the midst of their own doubts or uncertainties.