

Sermon Summary: Dare to Doubt

1. Do you think it's wrong to doubt or question God as a Christian? How would you respond to someone who believes that faith means submitting to "God's will" or "what the Bible says" completely and without question?
2. What does the Lutheran tradition say about religious doubt?
3. What does the Bible say about religious doubt? You might assume it's bad. After all, according to James 1:8 (NRSV), "the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord." Or again, the risen Christ tells Thomas, the so-called "doubting disciple," to "reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe" (John 20:27).
4. But wait! The phrase "the doubter" does not appear in the original Greek of James 1:8. Directly translated, it simply reads "a man double-minded, unstable in all the ways of him." Notice that the sentence lacks a grammatical subject. That means that the translators of the NRSV **added** the subject to clarify what they believe the sentence means! This is a great example of how every translation is an interpretation. The King James translation, however, more exactly renders the verse as follows: "A double minded man [a conflicted person?] is unstable in all his ways." The same is true of John 20:27: the word for doubt never appears in the original Greek.
5. Is it possible, then, to face God and doubt or raise questions from a biblical perspective? The answer, as we see in Habakkuk, is yes! Doubt, when addressed to God, presupposes faith; it presupposes a relationship we have with something or someone about whom we care. This makes doubt, in the context of relationship, more like a lover's quarrel. When not arrogant or dismissive but passionate and infinitely concerned, doubt can be part of faith.