

**Why are you troubled, why do doubts arise in your hearts?** That's us too. Spoken for me and you, how we live. Your troubles aren't based on your internet connection and doubts over discerning what is fake news.

We have real troubles, real doubts. Yet, we can interact with God like we interact with Amazon. The cardboard box amazingly appears in front of your door; inside the box, the answer to your needs, to use. That's why we shopped, read reviews, clicked "Complete Purchase." And, if we don't like it, *if it's not use-ful*, then we'll kick it back to the shipper. online shopping is an intensely religious exercise. Your every prayer (almost) can be answers and the box appears there at your door.

So what good is a Deity who isn't use-ful, for your troubles, doubts? We need things and God is there to ship it.

--My kids have the flu, family member has disease and I need God to heal them.  
--I've got a bad job, not enough money and heaven needs to send good fortune and better work. -- I've got a relationship that stinks and the Lord needs to make me and my loved one smell better.

The Almighty needs to make us healthy, happy, solve our problems as easy as a purchase return. Is that too much to ask?

In other words, if God expects us to trust Him, love Him; bend the knee before Him, He'd better step up to the plate and get things done. If we're going to be religious people, is it too much to expect religion to be use-ful?  
Yes. It is.

God is use-less. Not because He can't deliver. Not because He's lacking what we need. He is use-less because He's not a tool for us to wield. He's not a divine object we can bend to our will. He's not a great Santa in the clouds tossing down just the right packages to good boys and girls.

When it comes to giving you what you think you want, what you suppose you need, God is use-less. He will not be used. He will not be manipulated. He will not be played and utilized... One thing He will do: God will recalibrate your hearts so you realize, He is not an object from which you get things. Rather, He is The Thing. He and He alone, His love, works is why we believe in Him, love Him, adore Him.

Every "thing" God does give us is a little icon of Himself. It's not separate from Him. Every breath is of God. Every meal is of God. Every healing is of God. Every kiss is of God. He has wrapped himself in "things" but the things are merely that—wrappings.

What do we need when we're sick? God. What do we need when we're scared? God. What do we need when our relationships fail? God.

He will come to us disguised in various ways. Wrapped in medicine. Hiding in a soothing touch. Concealed in a counselor's words. But it's Him, clothed in these iconic things of the world, bring people into your life, coming to you, working for your good. **Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?**

You live with historical fact, reality the Lord is risen. Perhaps your difficulty is if it actually makes any real difference for your life.

There are those times, to be sure, when the news of the Resurrection warms and gladdens your heart. But times when your sinful heart is cold, hard, you wonder if He is working or if things matter. Then you go on mourning, weeping, as though sin were not forgiven, as though death were not defeated, as though there were no hope or help in all the world. After all, you still get sick and die. You struggle to cope and make ends meet. You wrestle with temptations and fall into sin.

Let's face it, your faith can be rather pathetic at times. Me too. By God's grace you believe -God help my unbelief, because you can't do it. He is the giver.

Once, Martin Luther was so depressed; none of his wife Katie's counsel would help, so she put on a black dress. Luther asked, 'Are you going to a funeral?' 'No,' Kate replied, 'but since you act like God is dead, I wanted to join you in your mourning.' Luther got the message. A message we all need from time to time.

### **Why are you troubled, why do doubts arise in your hearts?**

**That repentance and the forgiveness of sin be proclaimed in His name.** That's the sum of all preaching, all worship. If this it's not about the repentance for the forgiveness of sins proclaimed in His name, then it's focused on man and there's no shortage man-center preaching and worship in the Christian church.

He calls you to live repentant repentant, moment by moment in your baptized life. To despair of yourself; to believe in His Gospel. He makes all things new, including you, your faith and life. What He has accomplished, still accomplishes in you by His Cross and Resurrection;

There is comfort in that. Nothing has befallen you that is not common to man. As bad as you might be, as shameful your secrets are, they aren't new, really that special or interesting or creative. We all have dead people. We all struggle. You are not less troubled, doubts, but not more troubled, doubts either, than Peter or Mark or people gathered here today. We are all sinners who've fallen short of the Law.

He calls you to Himself by preaching His Gospel. He forgives all your sins, again and again by His very Word and Sacraments working in you. He raises you up from doubt and death to fear, love, and trust in Him. He reveals Himself to you here, feeding you, accompanies you on the way, there is nothing on earth that can harm you.

Despite the frailty, weakness of your mortal flesh: your lot of sickness, sin, death will not have the last word concerning you, not here, not ever. The Gospel has the last word concerning you, both body and soul. Your body too, shall rise, while you will never die, live in perfect peace and health, forever and ever. Until then, **why are you troubled and doubts arise in your heart?**