

Years ago, I had this teacher who loved those Intro to Philosophy exercises that made those of us encountering philosophy for the first time so insufferable. Our first assignment was to question everything, and when one smart aleck student asked him why, he grinned and said, “Good job.” After a week of this, it became clear that the point wasn’t just to question our assumptions; it was to show how hard everyday life is when you can’t make assumptions. To drive the point home, our teacher put a socket wrench on his desk. Before we arrived, he said he’d snuck in and loosened the bolts on one student desk and was disappointed that none of us checked the stability of our seats before sitting down. Right on cue, we wiggled in our chairs to find the loosened bolts. He laughed and said, “See, now you’ve trusted me without checking again!” We groaned, of course, and then I looked under my chair to find perfectly secured and tightened screws, not bolts. Others found the same thing. We called him on it, and he revealed the truth. He hadn’t messed with any of the seats, and the socket wrench was just to make his claim look legitimate. He hadn’t even bothered to see if a socket wrench was the right tool because that didn’t matter. What mattered was that the person in authority we were supposed to trust caught us trusting without question several times with one little act. It’s amazing how simple it was to manipulate us and unnerving to see how easily I could be manipulated. That exercise also showed how exhausting it is when you can’t trust anything. How tiring would everyday life be if you had to check every chair for stability, every lightswitch for secure connections, every floorboard for the strength to hold your next step. If you really questioned everything, you’d be tuckered out before breakfast.

I wonder if the Disciples felt a similar kind of fatigue. I imagine they’re unmoored. Were they right to drop their nets, leave their families, sell off their possessions to follow Jesus? Those who befriended Judas, did they miss some signs that could’ve prevented all this? Is it safe to go out? Will it ever be? Last Sunday, several women found the tomb empty and were perplexed. An honest-to-God angel reminded ‘em that Jesus said this would happen, though they doubted it could. The women told the Disciples who doubted their “idle tale” and ran to judge for themselves. Under the Roman Empire, the only time women could submit legal testimony was if two women reported the same thing. Institutions distrusted women; it’s no wonder that trickled down to the Disciples, too, though you’d hope following Jesus might’ve helped with that. Over in Matthew, soldiers guarding the tomb told the authorities what happened, and they were bribed to keep their mouths shut. Then the institution created the official story to sow doubt: the Disciples stole Jesus’ body, leaving the tomb empty and laying the groundwork for their unbelievable rumor. Who’re you gonna trust, after all, the followers of an executed criminal or the authorities? The Disciples knew they weren’t immune to those kinds of coercive powers. They already saw Judas get bought. How could they know the women weren’t paid off? And if they were, was this a trap to arrest and crucify the men, too? Even before Jesus was crucified, Peter was so afraid of being connected with Jesus that he famously betrayed him three times, and after his death, association with the crucified Christ could be seen as evidence of their guilt. So the Disciples hid, doubting they’ll ever be safe again.

We don’t know why Thomas wasn’t there the first time. Legend says he was brave enough to keep on serving the ones Jesus did. Maybe he was getting supplies so they could hide out a little longer. Maybe he was checking the political temperature to gauge if it was safe enough to come out yet. Regardless, when he got back and heard that he just missed Jesus, he doubted, too. A week later, Jesus came back while Thomas was there. He said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” Jesus might’ve meant that as a rebuke to Thomas, like, “everyone gets a blessing except you,” but maybe he meant something deeper. Everyone in that room knew Jesus when he was alive, and as of today, they’d all seen him resurrected, too. But

many who won't have that advantage would come to believe because of these Disciples. Instead of 'those who believe are blessed,' I wonder if Jesus meant that it's a blessing to live in a time when you don't have to question everything. John's Gospel, after all, is written so that you won't have to doubt, "written so that you might believe."

Set aside the miraculous for a moment. The leaders lie. They know they lie. The people know they lie. Everyone knows they can't trust those in power to tell the truth, but they can trust 'em to target anyone that questions the party line. And in societies that thrive on people living in uncertainty, authorities rule with relative ease. They spread misinformation to cover up Jesus' Resurrection, and the governor questions the concept of truth itself. Everyone, including the Disciples, had bathed in doubt their entire lives. Keeping the people guessing while claiming the moral high ground--that's a Machiavellian strategy. Make people uncertain of what their lying eyes see, and sow distrust for any claim contrary to their supposedly virtuous stance. Do it enough, and the people'll believe everything or at least act like they do. Even when people know something's false, they fear admitting to it in public because the one thing they can trust the authorities to do is anything--absolutely anything--that maintains their power. No wonder Thomas doubted.

In our day, we were told only criminals would be deported.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Since Holy Week, the truth's been shown to be very different. Do we dare tell it? Maybe I'm kinda like Mary Magdalene today, and maybe you're those Disciples. Trust me if you like, run to the sources if you must, but don't let the chaos sewn by a tidal wave of lies keep you from learning what's real. ICE deported a teenager they knew wasn't a target but sent him off anyway.<sup>4</sup> They broke into a husband and wife's car with a sledgehammer while they sat inside waiting for their lawyer.<sup>5</sup> They made children defend themselves in court, including a 4-year old.<sup>6</sup> They arrested a judge.<sup>7</sup> The wife of a wrongly deported man moved to a safehouse after the government posted her address online.<sup>8</sup> A father who's lived in the US for 35 years was detained on his way to pick his kids up from school.<sup>9</sup> A 2-year old citizen was deported without due process, along with a pregnant mother, another child with cancer, and another mother who was still breastfeeding her 1-year old baby.<sup>10,11,12</sup> All criminals, if you don't doubt. Meanwhile, the same authorities defunded programs meant to reduce prison rape, texted an entire college's employees to find out who's Jewish, found a second country to forcefully expel people to, threatened to deport American citizens, created programs in the State Department and the VA to report coworkers for anti-Christian bias, claimed migrants don't need due process because the government's incapable of making mistakes, and declared that

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2024/11/12/nx-s1-5181962/trump-promises-a-mass-deportation-on-day-1-what-might-that-look-like>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2024/10/22/trump-mass-deportation-plan-cost/75690260007/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2024/12/11/republican-governors-vow-to-work-with-trump-on-deportations-time-for-action-is-now/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/15/merwil-gutierrez-venezuelan-teen-deported-el-salvador>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/ice-agents-smashed-car-window-in-seizing-guatemalan-man-whos-seeking-asylum-family-says>

<sup>6</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/4-year-old-migrant-girl-other-kids-go-to-court-in-nyc-with-no-lawyer-the-cruelty-is-apparent>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clv5xx017vko>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/kilmar-abrego-garcia-wife-safe-house-b2738214.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/california-man-juan-alejandro-munoz-detained-ice-school-2063451>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/25/us-citizen-deportation-donald-trump-00311631>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/ice-deports-3-u-s-citizen-children-held-incommunicado-prior-to-the-deportation>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article305077166.html>

those who question any of this are guilty of aiding and abetting terrorism.<sup>13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20</sup> Now, I'm not going to pretend that any source of media's infallible. None of 'em are, but some are better than others.<sup>21</sup> One prominent source recently had to pay a \$787 million settlement for spreading lies, but they're so good at telling the lie that people still find 'em compelling anyway.<sup>22,23</sup> They've become especially adept at declaring the verifiable truth a lie. What is truth? If you only read sources from one side, "truth" has become whatever your preferred news source says it is.

I wonder how many feel like they need to hide with the Disciples now. I know when it comes to demanding truth on the Village Green, Colgate's international students are afraid of getting scooped up themselves. I know several folks worry their jobs won't be there for them come Monday if they attend a rally on Saturday. I don't know but I suspect that my name and a few others' populate lists naming future targets. Maybe I am guilty of anti-Christian bias; I'm certainly guilty of anti-wolves-in-sheep's-clothing bias. I'm also beginning to wonder what the finger-in-Jesus'-side moment will be for folks who've been taken advantage of by the liars. What will it take to see the truth the rest of us've been trying to tell? And how close can you get to that truth without getting bitten by it? I know this is a dark time, but there's a grain of hope in this story, still. Thomas did come to believe. It took facing the undeniable truth to see it, but he believed. And from Thomas and the rest of those in that room, truth spread all the way from an empty hole in a stone to the far reaches of the Earth, even little ol' Hamilton. That's the power truth holds. It may not be easy to believe, but eventually truth wins out. These days, truth's playing catch-up, but it will catch up. And when it does, I pray we'll respond as graciously as Thomas when he realized he was wrong. He didn't argue. He didn't lash out. He realized his mistake, and he claimed the truth that Jesus is "My Lord and my God."

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2025/04/just-defunded-a-national-program-to-end-itll-harm-queers-most/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/23/nyregion/barnard-faculty-eeoc-text-jewish.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://newrepublic.com/post/194312/trump-deportation-rwanda>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.thetimes.com/us/american-politics/article/bukele-el-salvador-us-citizens-trump-gs5n7083v>

<sup>17</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/state-department-religion-doge-rubio-trump-christian-biden-4fdb73a0cbf5651789b1aced667c2aba>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.militarytimes.com/veterans/2025/04/23/officials-launch-task-force-to-root-out-anti-christian-bias-in-va/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://reason.com/2025/04/16/trump-says-alleged-gang-members-dont-need-hearings-because-the-government-is-infallible/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.commondreams.org/news/donald-trump-free-speech>

<sup>21</sup> <https://app.adfontesmedia.com/chart/interactive>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/legal/dominions-defamation-case-against-fox-poised-trial-after-delay-2023-04-18/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/04/08/five-facts-about-fox-news/>