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Christine Grahlman

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To My Twin in Doubt

Christine Grahlman

*Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada,
Cambridge, Ontario*

Text: John 20:19-31

My name is Thomas and I have told this story many times to the members of the Body of Christ that they may be uplifted and strengthened in the confession of their faith.

I am a disciple of Christ. The Lord called me and through him I came to faith. I followed him and heard him speak and grew in trust in him. He spoke with great authority telling us about the kingdom of God as one who knew it intimately. He might point to a shepherd as we walked along and explain how God was the kind of shepherd who would leave 99 sheep to find one lost sheep. One day while he was preaching from a boat, he pointed to someone sowing seeds by the shore and explained the kingdom of God in this way: Some seeds fall on the path and are eaten by birds, but some fall in fertile soil and grow great amounts of wheat. He told us that the soil is the human heart and the wheat is the word of God; sometimes faith does not take root, other times it grows and increases a hundred-fold. He gave us many reasons to grow in faith. He fed multitudes of people from small amounts of food. He healed many. We were taught so much by him, and we loved him.

When he was condemned to die, when he died on the cross, we were shattered. We thought our hopes had died too. Had this Christ brought us to belief only to leave us where we began, without a leader? I was sure of it. But the other disciples claimed he had appeared to them. He had showed them the actual marks of the nails, they said excitedly, and of the sword in his side. They were overjoyed and believed. They said he gave them the Holy Spirit.

The whole problem was that I, Thomas, was not with them when the Christ appeared. I had not seen him. I would not believe. I, too, wanted to see him, touch him, feel his wounds before I would believe.

In Scripture I am called the twin, and so I am. For I find I have many twins: twins who doubt. Perhaps you are my twin, too. As I look into your eyes, I can see that you too have doubted. I can see the shadow of doubt in your eyes. Perhaps a dear friend of yours with whom you shared much and in whom you invested much love has been snatched from your presence, and perhaps this has caused you to doubt or feel hopeless, as it did me. Perhaps a tragedy has shaken your life. Maybe you have felt isolated from your friends because you did not see things the same way they did. I felt that way. I can see in your eyes that you too have had your trust shaken.

But the Christ did not leave me in a state of doubt. Eight days after the other disciples had been together and seen him, he miraculously appeared again. This time, I was there. There could be no doubt. He showed me his hands and his side—where they had been wounded by nails and sword. He let me touch them. He appeared to me in a bodily form and I believed.

You do not see the Christ exactly as I saw him. No longer does he walk the Earth as a human being. No longer is he an actual individual man whom you can touch to be brought back to belief—whose wounds can be examined in order to have faith and hope returned. You have not seen the Christ yet you have believed. And he said that you are to be blessed for that. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

And what of the doubts we still have? *The Lord does not leave you either at the point of doubt.* You may not be able to touch the Christ’s human body but there are other ways in which he is present in your life. Every Sunday, we disciples gather to eat the bread and drink the cup, which he named his body and blood. As if he was right there with us and time had never passed, we share communion with him. He is right there, present with us.

He reaches out to us in communion to forgive us again, to break down all of the barriers we have put up again by sinning. It is God reaching out to us again, to give us a new start, a new communion showing God’s love anew to us. Through this

new forgiveness, our faith in God is given a basis anew again in love.

The Christ has also given us other resources besides Holy Communion in the face of doubt. Though we can't touch his human body to relieve our doubts, we are given other disciples. Reach out and touch the body of Christ beside you or in front of you or behind you. Christ breathed on his disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit: You and I are given the Holy Spirit that we might be Christ to each other. "Peace be with you," he said. "As the Father has sent me so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any they are retained." When you doubt God as I did, go to your neighbour who can assure you of God's presence in your life through forgiveness. Forgive others to assure them of God's presence in their lives. If we decide not to forgive the sins of others, we have to weigh seriously the fact that thereby we may be giving them the message that God does not forgive, and perhaps even that their sin is unforgiveable in God's eyes. It is *God's* forgiveness that we give. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit we are the body of Christ together and to each other.

I am Thomas and I doubted and had to touch the Body of Christ in order to believe. If you are my twin in doubt, be also my twin in the great confession of belief. Make my confession yours: Jesus Christ is my Lord and my God.