

Dear Janey, Courtney, Chris, Jacob, Joshua, and Jeff, this present moment is so important to you - so drink it in! Dear hearers of the Word, this present moment is equally important to all of you, - so drink it in. Its chief importance comes not from these who are confirmed today. The chief importance of this moment comes from the fact that it is this moment - the present - the point at which time touches eternity. The risen Christ is in your midst right now to bring you heavenly gifts. The risen Christ is here in the present to cast worry and anxiety out of your heart, to bring you peace.

Satan, you see, tempts you to live in the past – with either regret or false pride. He can even use remembrance of your confirmation day decades ago to tempt you in these ways. You've been baptized and confirmed, you don't need to continue faithfully receiving Christ's gifts in worship, you don't need to continue in the study of God's Word. Oh, how wonderfully faithful you have been to the promises you made then – surely better than most (he whispers)! Or, how dreadfully you've failed in living up to those promises, day in and day out (there's no hope for you – he hisses). As these students give answer to the questions we ask them on their confirmation day, don't let the Father of lies mess with you with his schemes of focusing on the past. This present moment is where God wants your thoughts and your deeds – so drink it in!

To all the faithful, peace be with you. Amen.

What a bunch of chickens the disciples were! They can't even stick it out a few more days before going into hiding? The text says that they were gathered together on the evening of the first day of the week! Jesus was crucified on Friday and now Sunday evening they are hiding behind locked doors!? They are so quick to doubt the promise of Christ to be raised on the third day. It was easier for them to doubt Christ's teachings and promises than to doubt their own doubts!

Dear hearers of the Word made flesh, imagine if the government came into church grabbed myself or the Elder from the pulpit and executed us in front of you- one would think... that if you all got together again you would NOT do it in public and you would lock the doors and go into hiding. To be fair the disciples had good reason for doubt right? Their leader had been killed; everything that Jesus had stood for, taught, preached has been called into question. It surely was the end of the line. They needed to lie low until this whole thing just blew over.

This is truly an interesting account to include about the disciples. It is because throughout the centuries people have tried to falsify the witness of the Gospel's. Now, if one was trying to promote a religious movement, that was completely made up, it probably would not help the case if a writing surfaced saying that after the creator and leader was killed the followers were hiding and could not be found.

If John was trying to forge a document or push a false religious movement then he surely would have written about the disciples' bold witness after Jesus death. How they faced a public questioning and answered every question given about

their faith. How they were proclaiming it in the streets that Jesus would be raised from the dead on the third day! NOPE.... They are hiding on the third day. The Holy Spirit uses the truth of the weakness of these men.

The validity of the Biblical witness is founded in ordinary people receiving extraordinary news! These men hunkered down behind locked doors are not religious scholars, they are not political leaders. They are like factory workers, farmers, construction workers, police officers, secretaries, and school teachers. They are ordinary people like you and I, and they receive extraordinary news like you and I. We too, like these men, sometimes lock the doors of our lives to Christ. We don't want to be grilled by the world about our faith; doubt so easily slips in. Jesus comes through the locked doors of our doubts to show us His wounds.

This is exactly what happens for us still today in our Lord's meal. He gives you the benefits, the fruits of His wounds from the cross! You have wounds on you from this life. The trials, challenges, heartache, the guilt of sin, the humiliation of being sinned against! You have your wounds and Christ comes through the locked doors of your doubt and He has your wounds healed from the blood that flows from His side and the body that was beaten and crucified. The risen Lord's wounds that healed the world's sickness are here distributing their fruits for you to get you through this life, to remind you week after week that God cares about all your problems big and small! His message is for you to use every day of your life.

The most joyful words the doubter can hear at the Altar are "GIVEN FOR YOU and SHED FOR YOU!" Everything Jesus does in the Easter story is FOR YOU! His sacrifice and forgiveness is FOR YOU! Your wounds are touched by his shed blood and crucified body. He invites you to live by His wounds. Friends in Christ... Doubt your doubts, Not the risen Christ!

Jesus says to the doubting disciples, He says to doubting Thomas, He says to doubting US! "Peace be with you!" One can only scratch the surface of this phrase's meaning. This is not merely a greeting like, "Hey, what's up" or "Hey, how's it going, good to see you". It's more like Fear Not in the very presence of a Holy God! Do not be afraid! Aside from the disciples being shocked from a dead guy standing before them, you have their leader, their teacher, their God standing before them as they hide because of their doubts and fears. Jesus does not strike them with lightning for being doubtful, He does not curse them for having a weak faith but he says "Peace be with you!"

We will literally hear those words today before we celebrate the Lord's Supper. After speaking our Lord's words "The peace of the Lord be with you always" and then you will come to receive the fruit of His wounds at this Altar, His body and His blood! Just as Jesus told the disciples to go out and forgive sins you hear the Lord say to you "I forgive you all you sins". We see Jesus send his disciples out to continue His work. He uses doubt filled human's to do his work.

As we gather here it is appropriate to hear the Word's of forgiveness, to hear that we are at peace with God. Surely the doubts that we have in the promises of God are many. The world offers us plenty of reasons for us to doubt the risen Christ. And it's easy to doubt sometimes. It's confusing when you drive down the street and see 10 different denominations of Churches, when you turn on your TV to the History Channel documentaries that cast doubt on Jesus claims. It's hard to say that Jesus is the only way, truth, and life when our cultures religious slogan is one of "toleration" in regards to different religious beliefs, that we spiritually coexist. It is difficult to stand up to the acceptance of sin and the pressures to believe that "we all pray to the same God".

Friends in Christ "Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe" Jesus leaves you many, many reasons not to doubt. God has John write down what he saw so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing we may have life in his name; LIFE, not punishment because of your doubts.

Don't get so caught up focusing on how much you have the power to believe in Jesus, but focus on the object of faith, the crucified and risen Christ! He was raised from the dead because He was perfect; His obedience to the Father was flawless. Our faith is not our own. It is faith not found coming from within us, but it is grounded in God walking this earth in the person of Jesus, it trusts the sacrifice of Jesus Death on The cross, and it believes that Christ is risen from the grave!

John focuses in on Thomas for good reason- to teach us about ourselves. John calls Thomas "Didymus" which means the twin. This has theological meaning. In this account we see the doubting and skeptical Thomas who refuses to believe that Christ has risen from the dead. But this doubting, faithless Thomas was the one who boldly said earlier in Johns gospel, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Thomas is a reflection of every human being who has ever lived. He is a reflection of each of us.

We all battle with the doubting man within us. Some days our faith is doubt filled and some days it is bold. While our faith goes up and down the faithfulness of Christ is sure and steady. Even when you doubt and find it hard to believe, Jesus continues to cover your sin and heal your wounds. Despite you sometimes locking the doors on Him, He will continue to show you what He does through his death and resurrection FOR YOU.

God gives you every good thing in Christ, He brings you here into His Church, brings you to your knees and forgives your sins, he brings you to receive the benefits of His wounds in the Supper and confess "MY LORD AND MY GOD!"

Peace be with you. Amen.