

DEVOTION 18

*Christ Shows the Disciples His Hands and Feet
and Makes Them Glad in and Certain of His Resurrection*

Mel.: Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag

The day hath dawned, the day of days,
Transcending all our joy and praise;
This day our Lord triumphant rose,
This day He captive led our foes. Alleluia!

Th' Eleven's anguish as they mourned
This day to utter joy was turned;
As soon as they beheld their Lord,
All fear and doubting was ignored. Alleluia!

Then, as is meet, we now will sing
Glad Alleluias to our King:
To Thee, Lord, doth our praise pertain,
Who for our joy art ris'n again. Alleluia!

Verily, verily, I say unto you: Ye shall weep and wail, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you.

John 16:20–22



But they were terrified and affrighted, supposing that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye so troubled? and why do such thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and feet! It is even I Myself. Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet and side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they set before Him a piece of a broiled fish and an honeycomb. And He took it, and ate before them.

Luke 24:37–43; John 20:20

It is certainly alarming to read that the disciples of Christ still do not believe that He rose from the dead, even though He came and stood in the midst of them, wished them peace, and upbraided them sternly for their unbelief and hardness of heart. But that they still do not believe is plain and clear from their terror and fright as well as the fact that they think they have seen a spirit. Just as faith is such a powerful thing that even in the highest anguish and distress it makes hearts fearless and courageous, as we see in David when he struck Goliath, so unbelief is a dull, hopeless thing such that even in the highest joy it makes hearts despondent and powerless. The disciples ought to have rejoiced because of Christ's resurrection, but they recoil and are afraid of Him as of a ghost.

Seeing that the means of His words does not avail to release the disciples entirely from their unbelief in His resurrection, Christ therefore employs another means, namely, *outward signs*, showing them His hands and feet. And here the outward signs of the most Worthy Sacraments are glorified and commended to us as outward means to awaken and strengthen faith. For just as the external Word goes into the ears and there, by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, awakens and later confirms and upholds faith in God's promise, so is it also with the external, visible signs, which go into the eyes and produce a similar effect.

Here, then, we have *multiple proofs* of Christ's resurrection. First, He presents Himself visibly before the eyes of the disciples. Second, He speaks with them; and

says that they should touch Him. Third, He shows them His hands, feet, and side, and demonstrates clearly that it is He and none other, and that He is no spirit, but their Master, Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died; that it is He who, leaving the tomb, truly rose from the dead, and that the same body that He had before, which He received and took from Mary by the working of the Holy Ghost, though it is now a glorified body, which can be where He wishes, which nothing can hinder—neither wood, stone, iron, nor steel—which is and remains immutably and eternally blessed. Now therefore, inasmuch as He did not lay aside His humanity after His resurrection, it is certain that He so ascended into heaven, and as He ascended into heaven, He also sits at the right hand of His heavenly Father, true God and Man, therefore He can also be in the Sacrament with His body and blood after His resurrection.

But when the disciples are glad upon seeing the Lord, and yet believe not for joy, and wonder, Christ adds something further. For although His glorified body had no need of food and drink, yet that He might testify that He was truly alive, He ate a piece of broiled fish and honeycomb before them, as He had also formerly commanded food to be given to the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue whom He had raised (Mark 5:43). Hence when St. Peter mentions the resurrection of Christ in the house of Cornelius, he says (Acts 10:40–41), “God raised up Christ the third day from the dead, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but unto us, the witnesses chosen before of God, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.”

Because the apostles are alarmed by the Lord Christ as by a spirit, the Lord Christ also Himself confirms the appearance of spirits, saying, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.” Thus it is customary to ask whether spirits in fact appear, how such spirits should be regarded, and whether they should also be believed and followed.

Now, that spirits in fact appear is attested, in addition to the above-named reasons, by the fact that the apostles were alarmed and supposed when Christ was walking on the sea that it was a spirit. This is also attested by daily experience, since some people see spirits, although these are (God be praised!) not so common now with the light of the Gospel as in the darkness of the papacy. The devil is fond of sneaking about in the dark. Why? Because his works are evil.

But that such spirits are not *men* may be proved by the fact that the bodies of Christians are laid in the earth in their chambers of rest, where they sleep gently until the joyful resurrection of all. And as Lazarus's soul was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, so the souls of the righteous rest happily in the bosom of God and no torment can touch them. No more are they the bodies and souls of the wicked; for with respect to the body, they are also buried, their soul descends to their father, the devil, just as the rich man's soul was in the torment of hell (Luke 16:23), and Dathan, Korah, and Abiram went down alive into hell (Num. 16:33). At the same time, these apparitions are not *good angels*, for although these form a hedge around us, bear us up in their hands, and continually attend to their service, yet God maintains the ordinary way of having us instructed by His preachers and stewards and has no desire to show partiality to anyone.

Now therefore, because haunting spirits are neither good angels nor men, it necessarily follows that they must all be nothing but *demons*, terrifying men, inspiring superstitions, and deceiving the people. By God's permission they take on human form, imitate this or that person, and moan and lament in piteous manner. God lets this happen that He may keep us in His fear, drive us to prayer, and teach us to remember and take comfort in His Word and Holy Baptism, by which such specters are shown the door. For it was all smoke and mirrors and trifles when in the papacy they were driven out with holy water, palm branches, candles, and similar foolishness. By this Satan only wished to confirm the great, immeasurable blasphemy of the accursed silent Mass, the fictitious fire of purgatory, and other horrible idolatry, to destroy and diminish the perfect merit and sacrifice of Christ. Neither then was it the prophet Samuel, but the despicable devil, who in the form of Samuel appeared to Saul and the woman by God's permission (1 Sam. 28:5ff.).

Therefore, since it has been demonstrated from God's Word that ghosts are nothing but demons, it is easy to answer the third question: *whether they should be believed*. Because the devil is a liar by nature, and Christ does not wish to let him speak even when he tells the truth (Mark 2:11–12), we should not believe such specters on pain of eternal salvation, especially since God has forbidden it. We should not seek the truth from the dead (Deut. 18:10–12), but ask God to hold us to

the Law and to the testimony, or we shall not see the morning light (Isa. 8:19–20). Therefore Abraham will by no means grant the rich man's request to send one from the dead or Lazarus to his brothers, but says, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. . . . If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither shall they believe if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:27–31). God's Word alone is to be the lamp unto our feet (Ps. 119:105). The voice of the Father sounding from heaven directs us to Christ alone (Matt. 17:5). And Christ alone is the Light of the world; "whosoever followeth after Him abideth not in darkness" (John 8:12).*

Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God! As Thou didst visit Thy sore-afflicted disciples after Thy joyous resurrection, and didst comfort them and make them glad, so we heartily beseech Thee, appear with peace and joy also unto us and the whole Christian Church. Give us peace in our hearts, bestow peace on the land, and let us forever delight in peaceable habitations. O Lord, show us and all afflicted souls Thy wounds, that we may heartily rejoice against all the enemies of Thy suffering and Thy joyous resurrection. Give us the Holy Ghost, that we may daily arise from the death of sins and walk in a new life. O blessed Easter-King, let our bodies be made like unto Thy glorified body on that Day. Preserve us all in Thy Word and faith and thereby in heartfelt Easter-joy, and give us then the everlasting Easter-peace; who with Thy Father and the Holy Ghost art most blessed forever! Amen.

Mel.: Gott des Himmels und der Erden

Oh, those feet, how fair appearing,
 Passing through the doors of wood!
 Oh, that Word so sweet to hearing,
 By th' Eleven understood!

(continued)

* Accordingly a Lutheran Christian will know how he is to regard haunting ghosts and visions of Mary, if the latter actually occur.

Greeting full of gladness true:
Peace, oh, peace, be unto you!

With Thy lips of life salute me,
Which in Scripture truth express.
In Thy mercy ne'er exclude me
From Thy covenant of peace.
Spotless dove, allay my grief,
Bring Thy peace's olive-leaf.

Well should I at heart be fearing,
Since this peace I have not earned;
Many sins in me adhering,
Show that I from Thee have turned.
Oh, my faith is far too small!
How can peace upon me fall?

Seals, than all assurance dearer,
In Thy wounds to me are shown,
Where I see as in a mirror
Wrath and enmity are gone:
On Thy hand and feet I see
Marks of utter victory.

Still a doubt endureth longer,
Where Thy own give food to Thee;
If Thou wilt my faith make stronger,
Rather give Thou food to me!
Fish and honeycomb, O Lord,
Cannot match Thy gracious Board.