

April 15, 2012
Easter 2

"Peace and Life in the Risen Lord"

JOHN 20:19-20

P*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

Every Sunday after Easter we are privileged to hear the gospel lesson from John 20. Jesus appears to his disciples on the night of his resurrection with the words, "Peace be to you." Then he shows them the source of their peace, the wounds in his hands and side.

The Hebrew word for peace is "Shalom." Let's join in saying that Hebrew word together: "Shalom!" The Jewish people still use the word "Shalom" to greet each other just as we might use the words "Have a good day."

When Jesus says "Shalom" to his disciples he offers so much more than, "I hope you have a nice day." His words of peace offer a peace that this world cannot give. He offers the peace that comes from knowing our sins are forgiven and he is in control of our lives 24/7.

You have peace in your risen Lord

The disciples are hardly at peace as they huddle together behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be to you!" It was the evening of that first day of the week. It was not just Sunday evening, or a Sunday evening, it was that Sunday evening. It was the day when Jesus arose from the dead and appeared to his followers. Nothing in the history of this world is more significant than what happened on that day. What happened on that day has a huge impact on every facet of your life.

The magnitude of Jesus' resurrection from the dead has not yet impacted the disciples to the very heart and core of their being. Even though the reports have come in that Jesus is alive, and even though Peter and John have seen the empty grave with the grave clothes left behind, they are still huddled together behind locked doors in fear of what the Jewish leaders might do to them.

Before you jump all over these disciples and criticize them too harshly for their lack of faith and trust in Jesus' promise to come back to life again, consider how traumatic it must have been for them to watch Jesus allow himself to be arrested and beaten and crucified. Would the Jesus who allowed himself to be arrested and crucified also allow them to suffer for his name's sake? How far would it go? Would the Roman whip tear open the flesh on their backs? Would nails be pounded into their hands and would they die by hanging on the cross? Had he not told them that they would be hated when they stood up for his name? These beloved disciples were filled with needless fear because they had forgotten

Jesus' promise that he would rise from the dead.

Have you ever been afraid of what the future might bring in your life? In the past there have been Christians who have lived in fear that someone might come to their door and haul them away for believing in Jesus and confessing his name. I am holding in my hand a book by Richard Wurmbrand. He was a Lutheran minister who was imprisoned and badly beaten for his faith while living under communism in Romania. He bore on his back large scars from the whippings he received in the name of Christ. Fear also knocks at your door and mine. Fear tells us to just keep quiet about what we believe and not say anything, even to people we know and love dearly. Fear knocks at the door when we pray and things seem to get worse instead of better. Fear comes knocking as we plan how we think we should serve the Lord, and the Lord says, "No, I have other plans for you." Fear grips us when we step into the hole of sin, and suddenly feel ourselves being sucked down, deeper and deeper and the cry of fear rises from deep within, "Lord, have mercy on me! Jesus, have mercy on me!"

"Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'" Jesus did not have to knock and ask the disciples to open the locked door. He suddenly appeared to them. For three years the disciples have walked with Jesus, and ate with him, and saw him tired and hungry. They watched him each day as he set aside his power as God to live the daily struggles of life that we face. Now, he has returned to the glory he had with the Father before the world began. He suddenly appears to them. The gospel of Luke tells us that first they were frightened and thought they were seeing a ghost. The body of Jesus has the same hands, the same hair, the same skin, the same smile, the same eyes and the same sound of his voice. The work of suffering for our sin in his body was over. It was done. He stands before them with a glorified body, the same body that we will see when Jesus returns in glory and take us to the place he has prepared for us. 1 John 3 says, "We shall see him as he is."

What Jesus said to them that night changed their whole world and also yours and mine as well. He spoke these comforting words, "Peace be to you." He showed them his hands and side and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Can't you see them examining his hands? Can't you see them examining the wounds in his side? Jesus kept these wounds on his glorified body to give them the extra assurance that he had finished paying for every sin they have committed including the sin of being unfaithful to Jesus and not believing he would rise from the dead. The source of peace in their lives would not come in trying to make up for what they had done wrong. It came from knowing with 100% certainty that Jesus had done everything to pay for their sin of doubting their Lord's words.

If you were to visit the great art museums of the world you would see numerous paintings of this scene. Artists show the disciples gathering around Jesus in the dim light of that room. Their eyes are wide in wonder as they examine the forensic evidence that Jesus is alive and their sin has been paid for completely. We love these works of art because we see ourselves in that room with the disciples. Our Lord Jesus said in this chapter of John, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Think of how blessed you are today because you see the peace of your forgiveness in these wounds in the hands of Jesus. Think also of how blessed you are to receive his body and blood along with the bread and wine as even greater assurance of peace with God.

Satan is always working hard to create fear in you and me. He directs our attention to what is going on inside of our thoughts and minds as the source of our peace and assurance of forgiveness. He challenges us that if we do not feel at peace, we must not have the peace of forgiveness. He calls on us to obsess over the peace people enjoy in this world and reach out for that peace. He is a master at leading us to bitter disappointment and despair.

Jesus comes to us today here in his Word and says, "Peace to you." He tells us that we are truly blessed when we believe what we have seen with faith eyes given to us by the Holy Spirit.

In his book "Answer to Anxiety" Herman Gockel describes an art class where the teacher asked the students to paint scenes of peace and tranquility with the theme of water. Almost all the students tried to show a tranquil and smooth body of water reflecting mountains and trees. One student showed a thundering waterfall with a branch from a tree hanging over the falls. On the branch, was a bird happily singing in its nest. The class agreed that this was the best portrayal of peace. Amid the storms of life you are at peace with God. You see the forensic evidence for your forgiveness in the wounds of Jesus. With Paul you can joyfully say, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

You have life in your risen Lord

It says that these disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. They saw first hand that Jesus was alive. In Luke's account Jesus even asks for some bread and fish that he could eat with his disciples to show them that his body was real and he was really and truly alive. They examined the wounds in the body of Jesus. The wound in Jesus side came from the Roman soldier who pierced the dead body of Jesus with a spear. It was probably a fairly large, gaping wound. Jesus kept this wound on his body as the supreme forensic evidence that what was once dead is now alive. The body of Jesus that kept the wounds was now functioning as a normal human body with lungs and eyes and skin and hair and blood and heart and liver. It was a human body full of life, but also a glorified human body.

Dear Christians look at the life that exists in the body of Jesus. The body that rose from the dead will also raise your body to life again at the last day. Jesus said, "Because I live you shall live also." In 1 Corinthians 15 the comparison is made to seeds that are planted into the ground. Different seeds produce different beautiful flowers. "So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Philippians 3:21 assures us that Jesus will "transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body." The spear mark and nail marks on the body of Jesus are the evidence that Jesus was victorious over death. They remind us this morning that we will be raised to life again after we die.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Jesus did not have to knock on the door to seek permission to enter the room. He suddenly appeared in the midst of them. When you look at the body of Jesus standing in the room with his disciples, think of how Jesus is still with his church today. His body is at the right hand of the heavenly Father,

and miraculously he is with us here today. He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." The power that we have observed in the resurrection is a power that is ruling the world in which we live and also controlling his church in these last days. The vine is not dead. It is a life giving vine that gives new life to every branch attached to it, and allows us to bear fruit that glorifies him. He is the head, we are his members. As the brain manages the parts of your body, so the head, our living Lord manages and even micromanages every part of your life. Because Jesus is alive, nothing can ever separate us from his love. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord and so are we. Shalom. Amen.