

“Be Still And Know!” Resurrection Peace

Text: Acts 4:32-35

1 John 1:1 – 2:2 (Series B. 2nd Sunday of Easter) Ps. 133

John 20:19-31

The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Prayer:

Almost everyone is afraid of something. What is it that sends shivers up and down your spine? What is it that either paralyzes us with fear or starts us screaming? Is there something we are afraid of? Maybe it's one of these:

- Mysophobia is a **fear of "dirt"**
- Hydrophobia is the **fear of "water"**
- Nyctophobia is the fear of **"darkness"**
- Acrophobia is a fear of **"high places"**
- Arachnophobia is the **fear of "spiders"**
- Xenophobia is a **fear of "strangers"**
- Claustrophobia is a **fear of "confined places"**
- Triskaidekaphobia is a **fear of the "number 13"**

For the person who has some kind of phobia, say the fear of spiders, there is no peace until the spider is removed. Whatever we might be afraid of, until the cause of that fear is removed, there can be no rest and no peace.

That's how it was with the disciples, after they had witnessed the cruel death of Jesus on the cross. Then John tells us, *"It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the authorities."*

The disciples knew from experience that the chief priests and other religious authorities were very determined and would stop at nothing to get rid of them. Therefore, they were all huddled together behind locked doors. Who knows if they might be the next ones to be dragged away and crucified like Jesus?

But it was not only the religious authorities that the disciples were afraid of! One of their own had betrayed Jesus. If one of their most intimate comrades would betray them, whom could they trust?

So, the doors were locked because of fear. Fear can be a confusing condition. There is good fear and bad fear. If you are trying to cross a busy street, it is good to be afraid. If you are on top of a bald hill and there is a lightning storm, fear is normal.

On a personal note, I had a tremendous fear of failure during my first two or three years in this parish. I was so unsure of myself, frightened by others and couldn't be myself. But to be who I am, as a child of God, I had to face this dragon of fear within and deal with it through the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I came to the conclusion that I cannot change people's behaviour or circumstances around me, but I **can change me** by how I react through the power of the Holy Spirit. When I surrendered my fear and insecurity to God, God gave me his boldness and peace.

But if fear is given too large a role - if fear begins to dominate too much of our thoughts and feelings - it can become a distracting, distorting, disabling and even dangerous emotion. Given too much reign, we are no longer able to think and do things normally.

Into this locked room, the risen Jesus appears to the disciples and this only adds to their fears. Jesus is dead; they had seen it with their own eyes. They panic. The first thing Jesus addresses is their fear. We are told, ***Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ... Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you."***

This Jesus in front of them is so real that he speaks to them and shows them the deep wounds in his hands and the gash in his side. And Jesus' message is simply, **'Be at peace. I am with you; be peaceful.'**

When Thomas is confused about the disciples' claim to have seen Jesus alive, his message is the same. Even in the face of doubt, Jesus says simply, ***"Peace be with you,"*** and then he gives Thomas what he needs to believe. "Happy are those who cannot see, and yet believe." ***When we are afraid, God lifts us up***

This is how the Easter message works. What God accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changed everything. The risen Saviour brings us peace. When we are downhearted about our sin, when we are upset about the way we have treated others and especially God, the risen Christ brings us forgiveness and gives us peace.

It brings healing and reconciliation between those hurt and offended. It brings newness and a fresh start. We have peace of mind because we no longer have to fear the judgment of God. We say it in our liturgy again and again, especially after we have heard that we are forgiven, "Peace be with you!"

The risen Jesus brings us peace when we fear the day of our death, or when we stand at the open grave of a loved one. The risen Christ gives peace when we face times of doubt, confusion, crisis, sickness, and grief.

The fact that we have a Saviour who is risen from the dead assures us that he comes to us in those times. As Saviour and Lord of lords, he is able to support and help us. There is a lot in life that can make us afraid:

- threats to personal safety,
- being unemployed with family to support,
- being infected with Covid-19 virus,
- threats to our health, etc.
- threats to the happiness of our families.

We may be frightened by what is happening in the church today; we don't know if we will have enough funds to continue the ministry in St. Ansgar's in the next few years. We may be frightened by sickness or by aging. There are so many things that can cause us to be panicky and afraid.

In every case, in every moment, our God appears to us as one who offers us peace. Peace (Shalom) is not just the absence of war or strife; rather, it is knowing that God is on your side with sure confidence. **God lifts us up.**

Just as Jesus came to the fear-filled disciples through locked doors, he comes to us in our moments when we are filled with fear and the first thing he says to each and every one of us is, **"Peace be with you!"**

Here we come to an interesting and challenging part of our text. The peace that Jesus gives isn't just for our private use. He goes on to say, **"As the Father sent me, so I send you."** To put it simply, the peace that the risen Saviour gives us is to be shared, passed on to those around us who live in fear.

After experiencing God's peace through what we hear from God through his Word and receive from God through the Sacrament in our worship service, we are challenged to share the peace we have experienced with those who have no peace.

There are those who are burdened with guilt and old age and are dying and in need of the peace of God in their lives. Jesus commissions each and every one of us to be **channels** of his peace to others.

Locked doors could not keep him out. Nothing can. He is present among us as surely and as fully as he was with the disciples behind the locked doors on that first Easter. He is here with us to free us from our fears, to speak his peace into our hearts, to forgive our sins, to turn our sorrow into gladness, and to bless us.

'Peace be unto you,' 'I am come, be of good cheer and fear not.'
When we are afraid, God lifts us up "be still and know that I am God."
Amen.

Prayer concerns: *Ingeborg Eidnes, & Matilda Molyneau-Piper, Wes Bourgaize & Covid -19 patients, essential and frontline workers.*

Let us pray:

Holy Jesus, Risen Lord, guide us to see with new eyes, to love with new hearts, and to hope with new faith that we, as Easter People, open ourselves to new life, unburdened by doubt, radiating Your Light from within. We ask through You, our Glorious Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, our soul's Wisdom, who together with God, our Almighty Creator, live and reign now and forever. Amen.

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen! # 377
- Thine Is the Glory # 376
- The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done # 366

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