

2nd S of Easter - April 7, 2024 SM, SJ

John 20:19-31 - On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, 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.²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In the name of him we have not seen and yet believe, in the name of our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, DFR:

Peace is the absence of stress, things that upset and worry us. Peace is what we gain when a war ends, or a disagreement with a friend is resolved. When a guilty conscience stops bothering us, we also have peace – peace of mind. When a screaming child stops yelling or very loud music is turned off (or turned down), we have peace and quiet.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples on the evening of the first, Jesus' first words to them were: **Peace be with you.** A week later, on the Sunday after Easter, Jesus appears to his disciples again, this time with Thomas present, and again the very first words he utters to them are: **Peace be with you.** Jesus believed it important for the disciples to have peace, and it is certainly important for us also to have the peace that Jesus gives, so today we are reminded to:

Live in the Peace of Easter

1. The peace given by the Risen Savior
2. The peace that overcomes spiritual doubts

1. The peace given by the Risen Savior

It's Easter. Jesus has died, but the disciples are still living in fear. They are hiding behind LOCKED doors! Apparently they are afraid that since the enemies of Jesus managed to arrest and convict their teacher, they very well might now try to arrest and execute his followers. One of those in that room that evening, the Apostle John tells us that: **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.**

Jesus had told that he would rise. Various people like Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and Mary Magdalene have already seen him alive, but still, the disciples hold onto their fear and remain in hiding. And even though Jesus appeared to them on the first Easter evening and spoke a word of peace to them, a week later they were AGAIN behind LOCKED doors when Jesus appeared to them *again* and said to them: **Peace be with you!**

Humans are not by nature at peace. We're not at peace with each other. We remember the hurts and slights and injuries us. "He's the person who use to make fun of me in high school." "She's the stuck up person who wouldn't go out with me when I asked her on a date." "That's the person who always gives me dirty looks."

Like the disciples, we haven't done anything to deserve the peace that Jesus gives us. Instead of confidence in the promises of God, we have fear and questions and doubts. Am I really forgiven? Am I really going to go to heaven? Will we get enough rain at the right times this year, or will the harvest be a bust? We are in desperate need of the Peace of Easter.

Human beings are amazingly capable of finding reasons not to be at peace. We fear the words and actions of others. We fear what might happen to our kids. We fear that number and the greatness of our sins will cause God to reject us. We can't really forgive ourselves for some of the mean, heartless, thoughtless things we've done, so how could God forgive us?

He forgives us in Christ. He forgives us our sins, because he removed our sins and nailed them to the cross of his Son. We have peace in the Risen Savior because we know that the blood of Christ was shed for us, that Jesus died to give us the peace from guilty consciences, the peace in our broken relationship with God. We live in the peace of Easter because the peace means that Jesus has said to each and every one of us: **Peace be you!** In the pages of the Scriptures, we have seen and believed that the marks give us peace with God, making us his children instead of his enemies, forgiven instead of condemned.

2. The peace that overcomes spiritual doubts

As we all know, Thomas was missing on that first Easter evening. The other ten disciples – Judas has hung himself – saw their risen Savior that night. While Thomas often is maligned as the doubting disciple, let us remember that none of these disciples was filled with confidence. They were in hiding behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. None of them believed until they saw until after the Bible tells us that **he showed them his hands and side.**

When Thomas was told by the ten apostles about the appearance of their risen Savior to them, the Apostle John records Thomas' answer: **he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."** Doubt. Unbelief. A refusal to believe.

Thomas should have believed Jesus had told them he would die and rise again on the third day. **Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days . . . but the temple he had spoken of was his body.** Jesus had also told them: **as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** And even more directly, he had told them: **the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.**

Jesus knew exactly how to deal with Thomas' doubts. He appeared to his spiritually troubled disciple a week later and told him: **"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."**

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (29) Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Like Thomas, we too have spiritual doubts sometimes. If God really loved me, would I have ended up in the hospital for two months? If God really cares for me and watches over me, would hail really have wiped out my corn a couple of years ago? Do we truly always believe that **all things work together for the good for those who love God?**

To those doubts, our Risen Savior appears to us today and shows us the scars in his hands, feet and side. Like Thomas, we have received the Holy Spirit so that we also have peace, the peace of Easter that comes in knowing that Jesus has risen from the dead and broken.

Knowing that Jesus died and rose again assures that God does love us. He loves us so much he gave us his only Son to make the payment before God for our sins, our weaknesses, our doubts. He loves us so much he wants us to live with him forever and he will certainly not let things like hail and other earthly troubles get in the way of the crown of life that he wants to give us in heaven as we live in the peace of Easter. Amen.