

Easter 3: Luke 24:36-49
April 17-19, 2021

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.⁴⁴ He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Dear friends of our risen Savior:

Peace is such an elusive goal. At 5:00 a.m. on the morning of November 11, 1918 the Allies and Germany signed an armistice that would end the war. After 4 years, there would finally be peace. Unfortunately, even though that armistice was signed, it officially called for an end to the fighting at 11:00 a.m. that morning. And so because war is war and men are arrogant and foolish, the Allies continued to press the fight, and 2738 men died on that last day of the war. 2738 men died for no reason, fighting a war that was already over. The last man to die? Private Henry Gunther, who charged a German machine gun nest with a drawn bayonet at 10:59 a.m. The two German soldiers were aware of the armistice and tried to wave him off, but he fired a shot and was then killed instantly with a burst from the machine gun. He died at 10:59 a.m. on November 11 1918.

Just 20 years after this “war to end all wars” ended, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich, Germany after signing the Munich Agreement with Adolf Hitler and announced, “We have achieved peace for our time.” Less than a year later, the world was embroiled in another global conflict.

Why the history lesson? It proves that declaring peace doesn’t automatically achieve peace, unless the author of the peace treaty is God himself. Our theme this morning is

Resurrection peace drives out fear

- 1. It overcame the fear of the disciples**
- 2. It overcomes our fears today**

Last Sunday we considered Thomas’ reaction to the news of Jesus resurrection and his battle with doubt. Today our gospel lesson from Luke takes us back to that locked room on the first

Easter evening. In the first verse of our text we're told that **"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost."** "Talking about "this" refers to their conversation with the two disciples Jesus had walked with on the road to Emmaus. When the two Emmaus travelers had found the disciples in Jerusalem they were told, "Jesus is risen...he appeared to Simon Peter. And they had shared their good news about Jesus walking, talking and breaking bread with them.

So would this be a fair question? Why, after 3 of them seeing the risen Jesus and all of them hearing multiple reports of Jesus' resurrection would they be "startled and frightened" when Jesus suddenly stood among them? First of all, who wouldn't be startled by the unexpected appearance of someone in a room that John's gospel tells us was locked? And not just anyone, but the very man the who some of them had watched breathe his last breath in front of them just two days earlier. No wonder they thought it might be a ghost.

What does Jesus say? **"Peace be with you."** Such a common Jewish greeting, but more than just empty words when it's spoken by the one who delivered true peace between God and man 40 some hours earlier on Good Friday.

And then, as is so often the case with Jesus, he doesn't just simply speak words of comfort, although his words should always suffice. He also connects his words to something tangible. We're told that after he said "Peace be with you," **[the disciples] were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.** According to the prevalent superstition of the day, the spirits of the dead roamed the earth after death. ³⁸ **He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?"** ³⁹ **Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."** ⁴⁰ **When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.**

Jesus gave the disciples the evidence he knew they needed. And a week later he did the same for Thomas. That was really nothing new. Throughout his ministry, time after time, Jesus had offered the disciples concrete confirmation of who he was: at a wedding in Cana, on a fishing boat that he sent out at the wrong time of the day to the wrong part of the lake, on the side of a hill where there wasn't enough food, and then there was more than they needed, from a funeral procession outside of a little town of Nain to a grave in Bethany. Evidence in their lives when he rescued them from a life-threatening storm, evidence in the lives of those they loved when he healed Peter's mother-in-law, evidence in the lives of those around them when he gave sight to the blind and allowed the deaf to hear.

Perhaps we're a bit naïve though, if we believe that their fear of a ghost was their only fear. Might some of their fear been caused by what else they knew? They knew that the Jewish leaders' hatred for Jesus spilled over into hatred for them. They knew that the anger of the violent mob that had screamed for Jesus' crucifixion could just as easily scream for theirs. And just maybe, might some of their apprehensions have been caused by the shame and guilt of knowing that just 3 days earlier in spite of all of the brave protests and claims to the contrary, they had run from Jesus in Gethsemane at the first threat of danger?

Is it any wonder then that Luke tells us that **they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement**? “Joy” is simple enough to understand. Amazement? Amazed because it was so difficult to believe, and too good to be true. Too good to be true that not only was their Jesus alive and standing in front of them, but that their Jesus had returned to them to comfort and encouragement them, even though this is the very last thing they deserved. And with their amazement at what they now knew: Jesus is alive, this same knowledge undoubtedly triggered some new fears: fear of what they didn’t know. They didn’t know what Jesus’ resurrection meant...what it meant for him, and especially what it meant for them.

And so Jesus gives them more—more encouragement and more understanding: ⁴⁴ **He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”**

Jesus tells them, “Everything that happened occurred just as I said it would. Not just as I said it would, but as so many others said it would. Just as Moses said: Satan bruised my heel but I crushed his head; just as David said: I was forsaken by God but I was not abandoned to the grave and I did not see decay. Just as Isaiah prophesied: I was pierced for your transgressions and the Lord laid on me all of your sins.”

What did the disciples learn on that first Easter? That their confidence could be grounded not primarily in the logical evidence they saw with their own eyes, but rather what they heard through their ears of faith. Jesus knew that in 40 short days there would no more miraculous appearances in locked rooms. No longer would they be able to touch his side or cling to his hands. What they would have...all they would have...is his Word and his Sacraments. And so he was teaching them that having that Word and those Sacraments, they would now have everything they needed. That was his message to them in that locked room.

Do you think it was a coincidence that on the evening of Jesus’ resurrection the disciples found themselves in a room rather similar to the room where they found themselves the night before he died? What is not a coincidence is what Jesus says on both nights: **Peace be with you.** Jesus had told the disciples that he would rise on the third day, but they struggled to believe that could be true, even when they had every reason to take him at his word.

2000 years later we don’t sit in a locked room, but we gather here in this church. Two weeks ago when Pastor Raasch began our Easter Sunday service with “Christ is risen!” I don’t know that any of us said, “Prove it.” What do we have in common with those disciples of so long ago? Here’s the lesson for us: If the disciples wrestled with fear after three years listening to Jesus’ promises and now with their risen Savior standing in front of them, then it’s no surprise when we battle our own fears.

2. Resurrection peace drives out our fears today. Have you ever hidden in the locked room of your own thoughts—perhaps not on Easter Sunday, but in the weeks that follow. For many of us, our doubts and fears aren’t quite the same as the disciples on that 1st Easter. I’m not surprised that Jesus rose, but how often I’m surprised that Jesus was correct when he said, “in this world you will have trouble.” It’s as though I’m afraid that whatever the trouble is, I won’t be able to handle it, even though God has reminded me time and again that like the Israelites on the banks of the Red Sea, I need only to be still.

I'm not shocked when I find Jesus' tomb empty on Easter Sunday, but how many times I've sat at a funeral and asked myself, "How did this happen?" and forget that first of all, the wages of sin is death, but I also forget that on Maundy Thursday Jesus said that if he went a prepared a place for us, he would come back and take us to be with him. We sing "I know that my Redeemer Lives" with all our heart, but we sing "What God ordains is always good" and we hear Satan whispering in our ear, "How can you be so sure? Have you walked the halls of a hospital? Have you visited a cemetery? Have you watched the new? How is *that* going to work out for anyone's good?" We have every confidence that when God takes someone we love that they are in heaven, but we fear whether God really knows how to take care of us here on earth until we see them again in eternity.

Perhaps our greatest and most frightening fears? Our fear caused by sin: fear of what we know, that so often our sins have hurt those we love, damaged our relationships with others, and most significantly, damaged our relationship with our Savior. And fear of what we don't know: What temptation lies around the corner; why are there some sins that cling to us with such tenacity that we wonder if we'll ever shake them.

And one of Satan's favorite lies: Fear that there is some sin that lurks in our past or will stalk is in the future that will be one sin too many for God's grace. We know that Jesus said, "It is finished!" yet Satan tries to rob us of the certain peace that Jesus has won for us.

The solution? Jesus would take us back, not to the locked room in our text, but to the upper room 3 nights earlier on Maundy Thursday: **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid."**

The next day Jesus walked to Calvary and won that peace, and then on Easter Sunday he put an exclamation point on that peace treaty that has stood the test of time.

On November 11, 1918, even though man had declared peace, 2738 men still died. But since that first promise of a Savior in Genesis 3 and thanks to a week that we call Holy that was unlike any other week in the history of time; thanks to a bloody cross and an empty tomb; God declares "Peace be with you" and as a result, in the entire history of mankind, not one child of God has ever tasted eternal death.

Peace be with you today. Peace be with you for eternity. Thanks be to God. He gives us this peace through our Lord Jesus Christ.