

The Second Sunday of Easter

April 3, 2016

**Prayer of the Day:** O risen Lord, you came to your disciples and took away their fears with your word of peace. Come to us also by your Word and sacrament, and banish our fears with the comforting assurance of your abiding presence; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Alleluia! (John 20:29b)

**Sermon Text:** John 20:19-31

Good news. You hear it; you share it, right? You announce the birth of a child on Facebook or by texting or calling. You hand out invites to high school graduations. You tell all your friends what you received on your birthday or at Christmas. When you have good news, you share good news.

Just last week you heard very good news. Jesus lives! Because Jesus lives you now hold God's guarantee of life in heaven. You also know something very unique about this good news. Jesus gave his life for all people, but he tells you that whoever rejects his payment for sin will be condemned ([Mark 16:16](#)).

This might be where you start feeling a little squeamish. Because death in hell is not good news. You know that. You may also remember instances when you said nothing at all. That guilt can be

**John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup> 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!" <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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 it."

<sup>26</sup> 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!" <sup>27</sup> 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."

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

<sup>30</sup> Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

absolutely crushing— and shame can easily wash over you.

The Risen Lord addresses those fears today. Hear what he does with the guilt. See him lift you up from despair and equip you with words to share. **THE RISEN LORD GIVES YOU PEACE!** *That is why he is sent. That is why he sends you.*

All Easter morning **THE RISEN LORD GIVES PEACE!** Jesus appears to one disciple after another, assuring each one personally that God has accepted his payment for sin. Mary wails outside an empty tomb; Jesus gently wipes away the tears ([John 20:11-18](#)). The empty tomb baffles Peter; Jesus shows Peter he is alive ([1 Corinthians 15:5](#)). Two disciples walking to Emmaus do not understand why a great leader is crucified; Jesus connects the Old Testament prophecies to himself and his saving work ([Luke 24:13-31](#)). Good news, right?

Little by little the good reports that Jesus is alive spread. The two Emmaus disciples rush to tell the Eleven disciples that they too saw Jesus ([Luke 24:33](#)). Mary runs back to the disciples exclaiming: “I have seen the Lord!” ([John 20:18](#)) She carries an even more special message: the disciples could see Jesus by traveling to Galilee ([Mark 16:7](#)).

**On evening of that first day of the week** (that is Easter evening) the disciples have been swamped with this good news. They know Jesus lives; they have news to share. So where do you find them? **The disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.** They had just witnessed the Jewish nation successfully persuade Pilate to kill an innocent man! What would stop this mob from killing those associated with Jesus? So, they hide in a basement, doors barred, windows shut, curtains drawn— hoping that no uprising finds them and kills them.

But Jesus lives! If death is no match for him, then what can ever stand in his way?! In fact, you stand in awe at his mighty power. His eyes blaze with fire. His voice roars like gushing water. His face shines like the sun ([Revelation 1:12-16](#)). This awesome sight is peace— but does it appear out of this world?

The Jesus you and I love and respect is oftentimes not the Jesus others love and respect. You know that. You have good news to share, but you may fear how others respond. You may have classmates arrogantly claim that he does not exist! Your friends may shamelessly deny Jesus. Maybe they make crude jokes about what they would say or do to him— things too shameful to say in public! You may agree with (what you know are) false teachings about forgiveness of sins or baptism or the Lord’s Supper or the end of the world because you were too worried your words could make your friends angry. Society may insult your Bible-based beliefs on marriage and the priceless-ness of life so much and so often that you grow ashamed of those Bible-based beliefs. So, no, you may not physically lock yourself up in your basement, but you may lock up your heart, mind, and mouths from fear of the world.

You know you have good news; you are convinced of this. You have seen the Risen Lord. You saw him conquer death and stand the triumphant Victor of life. You know he reigns in heaven over all things. You can almost visualize this. The good news that Jesus lives—does not always appear powerful enough to remove fear and instill courageous confidence, does it? Instead, the sight of the risen Lord might heap shame for every time we hide from his presence!

You wonder, the disciples held this precious good news and fear still froze them stiff. Maybe no Jewish mob could find them, but **Jesus came and stood among them.** Now what? He looks into the uncertain faces of those who ran away to protect their lives while never giving second-thought to what was going to happen to his life. He sees the hearts of men who believed his teachings, but could not believe the reports that he was alive. What do you expect to hear? For those who are ashamed of Jesus that they hide their association with him, how justified Jesus would be to let them have their way—life without him!

He stands there, looks at eyes filled with fear. He opens his mouth. He does not rebuke. He does not reprimand. He does not demand “an increase of faith.” The very first thing he says to fearful friends is: **“Peace be with you.”**

How unexpected! To those who hide their connection to Jesus, **THE RISEN LORD GIVES PEACE!** *That is why he is sent.* He does not treat us as we deserve; Jesus is not ashamed of us. Instead, he unveils what he has done. He holds to the Word in our place, even when the disciples could not hold to it and ran off. He holds to all of God’s Word even though it brings him death. Yet, his Father treats Jesus as if he held back his preaching. The Father punishes Jesus as if he hides in fear. The Father places our punishment for Jesus to suffer—and Jesus removes it completely! It is gone; no longer there! He rises again to bring peace to your heart, mind, and soul.

**After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.** The physical fact that Jesus’ body bore our payment brings peace; it carries joy into the heart. Yes, those times shame holds us back from sharing Jesus, Jesus died for those sins. Those times fear washes away our joy in Jesus’ saving work, those sins are truly forgiven. In case our minds ever challenged the sincerity of Jesus’ words, look at the hands and the side! The effects of sin have been paid! The results of Jesus’ death are forgiveness, life, and peace! Guilt is gone! Shame vanishes! Jesus still loves you and he holds you close to him! **THE RISEN LORD GIVES YOU PEACE!** *That is why he is sent.*

Soon Jesus would enter into heaven. No longer would he sit on hillsides preaching and teaching; no longer would he reach down with his healing touch. The Father sent him to complete his ministry— and Jesus did. With Jesus’ ministry reaching its full end, **THE RISEN LORD GIVES YOU PEACE!** *That is why he sends you.*

**Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”** Jesus’ forgiveness is intended for all people. The disciples experienced the peace of his forgiveness. Now, they are sent out with that forgiveness. Because God loved them, they go out to share the love of God with others ([Acts 5:17-32](#)).

So, you hear the Pastor say to you: “I forgive you your sins...” He is not forgiving you by his own power. Only God can forgive sins; only Jesus can hold your hand as you stand before God’s throne. The Pastor follows Jesus’ command as he publicly announces God’s forgiveness to you. You have asked him to publicly announce forgiveness to all who gather in worship.

Not only does he forgive sins, but Jesus gives you the privilege to announce God’s forgiveness to others. Notice, Jesus gives the power to forgive sins to all believers. The power to forgive sins does not rest in your power; you did not secure your own brand of forgiveness to distribute. So, when someone sins and confesses that wrong, you announce God’s

forgiveness. You assure them that Jesus suffered the consequences of that sin. When someone refuses to repent and call something “right” which is actually “wrong,” you refuse forgiveness. Again, it is not that you are refusing forgiveness. You stand as the voice-piece of God and work to lead that person to confess their sins and receive forgiveness. Your announcements are as valid as if God himself is standing in front of you and announces your forgiveness.

Do you see what the Risen Lord gives you? Yes, he gives you peace—but he gives you peace to share! Jesus has paid for the sins of the world! Many lived locked under crushing guilt. Some know their marriage is filled with imperfection. Others question the false teachings they hear in their church. Still others do not know how to scrub away arguments and grudges and hurt. Their sins tie up their lives— and they do not know if they can ever be forgiven. You have words of peace to share.

The peace Jesus gives you to share is a peace which the world cannot give. Yes, sometimes you might feel that you do not have the words to say. You might fear saying the wrong thing. You might worry about getting asked a “tough” question that you cannot answer. Yet, consider this: You have not seen Jesus either. How did you get over those “tough” questions? By a Spirit-worked faith. You heard the Word of God preached to you. You believed because of the Word of God. If the Word converted your heart, then it has the same power to work on others.

That is why John writes his eye-witness account. **Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.** The Holy Spirit has given us all you need to know for eternal life. You believe that Jesus is God’s anointed Son, the one foretold in prophecies, the one who came and fulfilled everything spoken about him. This was testified to at his baptism. People heard it. Even at his crucifixion they saw Jesus forsaken by his Father.

So, John writes this eye-witness account so that others might read and believe in them. He describes the miracles so that people might know Jesus is someone different. He includes his powerful words so that people may hear the voice of the risen Savior. Out of all the things Jesus said and did, these select few events are written down so that you might hear and believe. They are written down so that you might share them with others to hear and believe.

Just last week you heard very good news. Jesus lives! Because Jesus lives you now hold God’s guarantee of life in heaven. You also know something very unique about this good news. Jesus gave his life for all people, but he tells you that whoever rejects his payment for sin will be condemned ([Mark 16:16](#)).

So, bask in it! God has forgiven your sins in Jesus. The times fear heaps shame on us, stand under the forgiving flood of Jesus’ blood. Then, take this forgiveness and share it! You have this priceless news which is different from anything else the world has to offer.

The Risen Lord addresses those fears today. Hear what he does with the guilt. See him lift you up from despair and equip you with words to share. **THE RISEN LORD GIVES YOU PEACE!** *that is why he is sent, that is why he sends you.*