

Title: “Peace be With You”

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John 20:31

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Service Readings: Acts 5:12-20 (21-32); Rev. 1:4-18; John 20:19-31

Jesus offers his peace three times, not because of any imperfections in his offer but because he is the peace and so where he is, there is peace. In the middle of their upside down world, when everything seemed completely lost, Jesus shows up and offers himself. He says “here I am and because I am, you have peace.”

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Where do you find your peace? The disciples? They weren't sure. Only days ago they had scattered as Jesus had been arrested, too afraid to stand by his side. They remained at arm's length as he was tried, tortured, and then crucified. They hid as his lifeless body was laid in the tomb and remained there until this day. And even now, even after word from Mary that Jesus had risen, they remained behind locked door for fear that the Jewish leaders were coming for them. They had no peace. They felt afraid, sorrowful, and even abandoned by Jesus. They felt all that and more, but definitely not peace. That had been taken from them and hung on a cross to die. And so, void of it they were in search of a replacement because what is life without it? And so they went looking for it in the hiddenness of their location; they went looking for it in the barricade of the door; they went looking for it the togetherness of each other. I can only imagine that they even sought it in the announcement of Mary, but the hope that their peace had returned was just too great to take hold of. And so, they remained gathered in a room: a room with no teacher; a room with no peace.

This was the context in which Jesus enters the room:

¹⁹ 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.

Their peace had returned and was standing with them in the room. But what, exactly was this peace that Jesus spoke about? Was it a life where there was no longer a need to stay hidden and barricaded? That may be what they were expecting, but that's not what Jesus brought because only a week later they still remained behind a locked room, hiding and fearful. They may have hoped that he was offering something like a slow-flowing river, where all their cares would drift away, but he didn't. It was more akin to the Niagara Falls. He even says that much in his words to them: “As

the Father as sent me, I am sending you.” The path that he just took, the memory of which was still fresh in their minds, was a path filled with rejection, suffering, and death. It was a path that drove them into that locked room! And this was the peace that Jesus was bringing them? Yes. This was it. And it would prove to be a path that would in some ways mirror his but it would also be a path that the disciples would soon embrace as the only path worth taking.

So what was this peace that was so strong that it that moved them to break free from the confines of the room? What was this it that drowned their fears and turned their sorrows to joy? The invitation that Jesus extended to the disciples was a promise, not in the activities of their lives, but in the relationship they have *in* him. Said differently, the peace that Jesus offered them was not a peace that would manifest itself in the quietness of the world around them but in the security of his presence within them. It is a peace that would keep them focused on him every time they seemed to be traveling over the edge of life’s waterfall. It was a peace that would give them a calmness when the world seemed to be falling apart around them. That was exactly what they were looking for, and that was exactly what found them.

<PAUSE>

But... three times Jesus offers them his peace and you have to wonder what went wrong the first two times. Surely he didn’t misspeak or offer them just a portion of his peace. Did it just not “stick” until the third try? These kinds of questions manifest themselves when we look at this event through the lenses of the world. We see peace as a telos, something to move towards or something to acquire. And when it remains out of our reach we continue chasing it, striving ever harder. The promise of peace comes by many names: wealth, health, or relationships. We chase after this goal by telling ourselves that with the right amount of money, or better health, or an improved relationship, we will grasp on to the reality of peace; we will finally “make it” across the finish line and will be able to coast. Or back to the earlier analogy, we will be able to relax in the calmness of the slow-flowing river. But in reality, the only river we would find ourselves relaxing in would be the one headed for the Falls.

Jesus offers his peace three times, not because of any imperfections in his offer but because *he* is the peace and so where *he* is, there is peace. In the middle of their upside down world, when everything seemed completely lost, Jesus shows up and offers himself. He says “here I am and because I am, you have peace.” This is how they can continue to have peace during the persecutions of their ministries and lives. It is because they know that peace comes not from the life that is lived but through whom that life is lived. And whom they live it through is the one who bore their sins and received their judgement. They have put on Christ and so they find peace - a peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that transcends the turbulences of this life. That is the peace that they experience through him. And it is a peace that doesn’t end at their deaths but one that will find its completion in the resurrection of their bodies on the last day.

This morning Jesus stands among us, here in our midst and he offers himself as our peace, also. We can take hold of him and we can experience this peace - not a peace *from* Christ but a peace *in* Christ, today. Maybe some of you are experiencing it right now, but maybe some of you have locked yourself in a room, barricaded everyone out because all hope just seems lost. Just as he did

for the disciples, he has appeared in your midst right now. And just like he did for the disciples he offers you himself, he offers you peace.

How do you take hold of Jesus, your king of Peace?

You believe that his death on the cross accomplished forgiveness for you. That all your sins were forgiven because the father accepted Christ's payment on your behalf.

You believe that sin no longer controls you and death no longer haunts you because Chris has risen and offers you his victory.

You believe, as John writes at the end of our passage,

“that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

He is offering himself to you. Here stands Jesus; here stands peace. Peace is with you.

Let us pray

When peace like a river attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well with my soul