

## Title: “Fear Turns to Joy”

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John 20:19-23, 1 John 1:5-9

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**Service Readings:** Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1 - 2:2, John 20:19-31

*The disciples hid from Jesus but he still came to them. And their fear turned to joy.*

### 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.

<sup>19</sup>On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,<sup>19</sup> Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup>And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

The disciples were huddled in a room, ashamed and afraid. The Jewish leaders were out to get them and if Mary was right, and Jesus *had* risen from the dead, then he was probably out to get them, for they had fled when he was arrested. They should have stayed by his side.

It seemed that both heaven and earth were out to get them and their only protection to be found was a locked door and an unpublished address. That might have worked for the Jewish leaders but it was no match for Jesus, for immediately he appears in the room and not as a ghost but as a human. He has come to them and he speaks! But anger is not in his voice and vengeance is not on his heart. Instead, he offers forgiveness, a restored relationship, and peace. “Peace be with you,” he says to them... twice. And fear turns to abundant joy. Jesus their teacher, Jesus their master, Jesus their lord is no longer dead; he is living and he is with them. And he is not angry.

They had abandoned him only days before. They hid as he was tried and tortured. They had stood by as he was killed. Peter had even denied knowing him. And yet Jesus had not abandoned them. He had not hid his face from their sins. Jesus had not stood by while they, and all mankind, faced eternal death. He had not denied knowing them.

Yet he was not here to take revenge inflict punishment. Instead, Jesus was giving, and doing so abundantly! He was offering them peace and even more. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he proclaimed. And into the temple of their flesh God took up residence. No longer would the dwelling place of God be a building. It would be flesh and blood. It would start with these people locked in the room and then extend out to the four corners of the earth. And more than that, these bodies, once independent, were now joined together through Jesus, into a *universal* body that is called the apostolic church even to this day. And to this church he gave a charge – to go into the world as witnesses and proclaim the reign of God.

Is it any wonder their fear turned to joy? Jesus was alive! Jesus still loved them! Jesus forgave them! Jesus empowered them! And joined himself to them! And Jesus would send them out into the world, emboldened and unafraid. From fear to joy; from timid to bold. No longer would fear control their life. Their encounter with Jesus turned their fear to overabundant joy.

This morning I ask what in your life has driven you into a room where you have locked the door and unpublished your address? What in your life has caused you to lay hidden from the world? What has stolen all the joy from your life? And I'm not talking about the fake joy that you present to others. I'm not talking about the fake joy that you present to yourself - trying constantly to convince yourself that you truly are happy even when you know that if you stopped repeating that for even one second, reality would come crashing in and expose the real truth to you. Not that fake joy, *real* joy. That's what I'm asking. What has driven it out of your life and forced you into a locked room? Do you peek out of the windows and watch as everyone else seems to live life joyful and worry-free? Do you wonder if it seems unfair that you can't be one of them?

Or, even worse than hiding from the world, are you hiding from God? What have you done that has forced you into this room where you pray that Jesus will not find you? What is it in your past, or even your present, that has driven you into this room, locked and guarded from him? We all have something. Every one of us. <sup>8</sup>If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

I'm here to remind you that Jesus has come; he is present in this room right now, with you. And he is showing you his hands and his side. Look at them. Look at the holes that were left from the nails that affixed him to the cross? Look at his side, still open from the spear that pierced his heart. He's standing in your presence, take a look at him. These are his battle scars as he fought and conquered sin and death. These are reminders of what it cost him to now stand before you. *This* is what the disciples beheld that evening when he appeared. I wonder if they looked upon these wounds and became overwhelmed with guilt at the thought that they had contributed to his suffering, his death. I wonder if their fear turned to deep sorrow at the realization that Jesus had died, in part because of them. Is this how you feel when you look at his hands and side? Do you see the marks from your sin?

"Peace be with you." That is what Jesus spoke to the disciples. He spoke not just to calm their fears. Nor did he speak these words just to convey that he was not angry with them. There was much more behind them. The wounds on his hands and feet, the piercing in his side, the suffering that he had endured, he did willingly. The disciples contributed nothing. The disciples forced nothing. The disciples allowed nothing. All of it was allowed by Jesus. The disciples had no part in what he endured. Just as they had no part in what he now celebrated. It was all the work of Jesus. And when he spoke these words, and when he breathed the Holy Spirit into them, I can imagine that they began to understand this. They were not contributors to his work, they were benefactors! And he was standing before them, risen, alive. And he was sharing his victory with them. Is it no wonder their fear turned to joy?

"Peace be with you." This is what Jesus speaks to you today. And he speaks not just to calm your fears. Nor does he speak these words just to convey that he is not angry with you. The wounds on his hands and feet, the piercing in his side, the suffering that he has endured, he did willingly. You contributed nothing. You forced nothing. All of it was allowed by Jesus. you had no part in what he

endured, just as you have no part in what he celebrates. It was all the work of Jesus. And it was all done because of his great love for you. He brings peace to calm your troubled heart. There is nothing that you have done, nothing that you can do, that will make him regret what he already did for you. There is nothing in that locked room that you need to hide from him. It has all been paid for.

“Peace be with you.” He stands in front of you and he speaks words of peace. Look at his side for from it flowed blood and water. His blood, shed for you, sacrificed for you, is now offered to you for the forgiveness of your sins. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he says. The water, the living water that flowed from his side washed over you in your baptism where he told you that you are loved, you are joined to him, and you are forgiven. Unlock the door and publish your address. Jesus has found you. He has forgiven you. He has brought you the Holy Spirit, and he has given you peace.

Mediate on this. And turn your fear into abundant joy.

Please pray with me.

Almighty God, we confess that we, like the disciples, often hide from you in fear and shame. We forget your love and forgiveness, and we withdraw from your presence. Help us to remember that you are always with us, even in our darkest moments. Grant us the courage to face our fears and trust in your love.

Amen.