

“Peace be With You”! - John 20:19-31

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed, this morning, the Second Sunday of Easter, we are going to meditate in the Gospel of John 20:19-31. Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the LORD our God; that is, in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

+++++

He is risen! He is risen indeed! What a wonderful declaration that is! Jesus lives, and because He lives we can be sure that our God will forgive the sins of those who repent, and will give life and salvation to those who trust in Him. Jesus lives, and that means that the power that sin, death and the devil had over us is destroyed forever. Jesus lives, and in His life we have the sure and living hope that God will be with us to help us, to bless us and to strengthen us as we struggle through the cares and worries of our life. He will be with us in all things to see us through, and to give us the victory that is ours in Christ.

Day by day, we can be sure that the world is different, that our lives are different because of the Resurrection. Jesus lives! And so we gather today as we do every Sunday to remember, to rejoice and to celebrate the life that is ours through the death and the glorious resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In these weeks after Easter, the Scripture lessons remind us again and again of the blessings that are ours through the life-changing power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And one of the greatest of the blessings that are ours in the Risen Christ comes through the simple greeting that the resurrected Lord shares with His disciples as He appears to them and says, **“Peace be with you.** From anyone else, that would be a polite greeting, a simple prayer for a happy life. But when spoken by the Living Lord, it is the promise of a real and lasting peace, a peace that we so desperately need as we face the struggles of life in this world. And today we want to rejoice in the peace that is ours through the living Lord and Saviour.

Friends, I think everyone is familiar with the Nobel Peace Prize, given each year to the individual or individuals who have done the most for the cause of peace in our world. There have been many controversial recipients of that award over the years. But no one is more deserving of that prize each and every year than our Saviour, Jesus Christ. When Jesus says to His disciples, **peace be with you** He bestows on them the peace that has been the purpose of His entire life, death and resurrection. Remember how, when Jesus was born, the angels filled the skies around Bethlehem with a wonderful hymn, **“Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth”** Jesus came to bring peace, the peace between God and man that is lost because of our sin. By giving Himself in our place upon the cross, Jesus has brought the forgiveness that we need because of our sinfulness; the forgiveness that is necessary if we are to be at peace with God.

It is through this atoning sacrifice of Christ that St. Paul can say: **For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, and Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** If Jesus had not died for us on the cross, then there could be no peace for us. God would still be separated from us because of our sin, leaving us with nothing to look forward to in the future except the punishment of eternal death in hell—which we truly deserve because of our sin. But Christ died for us, and in our text we see the resurrected Christ standing before His disciples and saying, not once, but three times: **Peace be with you.**

And we are told: **The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.** They knew, they felt, the peace which only the Living Lord can bring to the hearts and lives of His people. And how we need that peace each and every day! It is almost mind-boggling to think of all the things that are happening in the world when the glory of Easter shines so brightly for us! Although Christ has won the victory for us, we can see that the devil still fights on, doing his best to destroy the peace that is ours in Christ by first destroying peace in our lives.

Pick up the newspaper to read the news or watch them in the TV and you will see all the madness that is going around in the world at this moment. For example there was an attack on Christians last Sunday in the city of Gulshan Iqbal Park in Pakistan. This attack happened on Resurrection Sunday. Friends more than 75 Christians died, and among those who died there were 30 children. There were 350 people wounded. Just for our information the Christians in Pakistan makes

up only 2% of the population. I cannot conceive this madness but extremism has no regard for human life. Most of us live in the city and we could hear every day the sirens of the fire trucks and the ambulance as they sped with someone inside who is sick, or suffered an accident. Friends, those sirens are a reminder of how fleeting the peace of this world, of our lives really is. We all suffer all kind of illness from time to time. There are those among us who have had to deal with bad news related to deaths, job changes and other problems.

The devil uses all of these things to rob us of the peace that God wants us to enjoy. These things—and countless others like them, bring fear, worry and uncertainty into our lives. They make us to ask to our Lord, “where is the peace that you spoke of Lord?” If you have given us peace, why do things seem so unsettled in our lives? And if that is not enough, it still seems that, in spite of the resurrection, we have all the same problems that we deal with each day. Yes, Jesus rose from the dead, but we still see struggles between husband and wife, between parent and child, among friends. Then where is the peace that Jesus gives? We still have our own doubts and uncertainties about our jobs, our future, our well-being. Where is the peace? We still have the pains and illness we had before Easter. And our society is still filled with violence and terrorism, with crime and corruption. Where is the peace?

The prophet Isaiah once wrote: ***You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you.*** The peace which Jesus gives is that perfect peace, the peace which, St Paul reminds us, ***transcends all understanding.*** Before Easter, before His crucifixion, Jesus had told the disciples: ***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.***

Jesus did not promise the kind of peace that made everything wonderful in this world. In fact, Jesus had warned his followers that they would not have a peaceful life in the here and now. Jesus said ***“You will be hated and persecuted because of me”***. Your lives will be difficult because you are my followers. And then He told them: ***“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”***

Peace be with you, Jesus said to them. And the disciples knew the peace that passes understanding. Even when they were arrested and threatened with greater punishments because of their preaching, they had the peace in their hearts which enabled them to say: ***We must obey God rather than men!*** The very disciples who had locked themselves away in fear of the Jewish leaders now preached the message of salvation in the Risen Lord. They had His peace upon them, and not the Sanhedrin, not the world, not even the devil could take that peace away from them.

The Risen Lord gives that same perfect peace to us. Since we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we can be sure that He will, as He has said, keep us in perfect peace at all times. Even when the fiercest storms are raging above, there is peace and calm in the depths of the ocean. And that is the peace that Jesus brings - the inner peace and tranquillity that is undisturbed by the storms and agitation of our life. In those very moments when the devil works so hard to rob us of our peace, the Living Lord comforts us with the Spirit, who brings us His peace, the peace that passes understanding.

In those dark moments of doubt and fear, we have peace because Jesus has overcome the world and has won the ultimate victory. ***Peace be with you,*** Jesus says. He brings peace into our hearts as He takes away our sin and guilt. He brings us peace as He lives to silence all our fears. He brings peace, as He leads us through the darkness and turmoil of this world into the sure and certain hope of eternal glory. Peace be with you, not the fleeting peace of the world, but peace as only the Risen Lord can give it. Amen.

“The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keeps your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour”. Amen