Easter 2 John 20:19-31
April 19, 2020 169-165-165, vv. 5-9-145

"Peace Be With You!"

I. Peace because Jesus really is alive.
II. Peace for us to share with the world.
III. Peace found only in God's Word.

Dear Christian friends,

Put yourselves in the **sandals** of the disciples that **first Easter evening**. What a ROLLER COASTER of **emotions** they were riding. There was the joy and excitement of Palm Sunday. The calm and then the CRASH of Maundy Thursday. The horror and hell of Good Friday. We know only of **John** and **several women** who were actually at Calvary on Good Friday. Their LAST SIGHT of Jesus was of His bloody – **tortured** DEAD BODY being quickly buried in Joseph's tomb.

But now it's **Easter evening**. They're gathered together **trying** to MAKE SENSE of it all. They had ALL forgotten Jesus' clear and repeated PROMISE – "***on the third day'*** I will rise again." This day had begun with ALL of them convinced that Jesus was dead and buried – GONE **for good**. But as this day had **unfolded** the NOW RISEN, **living Jesus** had appeared to Mary Magdalene, the other women, Peter and the two Emmaus disciples. They now believed Jesus **was risen** but they were having a hard time MAKING SENSE of it all. They HAD NO ***"peace."***

You know that **feeling**, don't you? We BELIEVE God's Word – God loves us – He's with us – **taking care** of us – working all things for our good – AND YET we struggle with **doubts** and **questions** – we WONDER and WORRY. We too have a HARD TIME making sense of things. We too believe but HAVE NO ***"peace."***

Then ***"Jesus stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!'"*** Oh, WHAT A SIGHT! **How** we also need to SEE it again – Jesus RISEN – **alive** – **triumphant**. How sweet and comforting to HEAR Jesus say to you and me, ***"Peace be with you!"***

That's not just a WISH or a friendly greeting. That's a statement of FACT. ***"Peace be with you!"*** 1)Peace because Jesus REALLY IS ALIVE, 2)**peace** for us to share with the world, 3)**peace** found only in God's Word.

I. Peace because Jesus really is alive.

NONE of them had been expecting this but now ALL of them – WITH THEIR OWN EYES! - were now seeing Jesus **alive** again. **Once again** they're having a HARD TIME **figuring** it all out. Luke writes, ***"They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost."*** But Jesus wanted them – and **us!** – to HAVE NO DOUBTS **whatsoever** – He really is ALIVE again. Jesus ***"showed them His hands and side."*** He invites them, ***"Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."*** They're ***"amazed and overjoyed"*** but still trying to MAKE SENSE of it. Jesus then ***"ate a piece of broiled fish in front of them."*** It REALLY IS Jesus! He really is ALIVE again! It's not the spirit of Jesus that **lives on** – Jesus HIMSELF is alive!

And His first words to them were NOT WORDS of anger and rebuke for how they had all deserted Him and then forgotten His **promise of Easter**. Jesus wasn't disgusted and FED UP with them. ***"Peace be with you."*** Those are words of LOVE and **forgiveness** – of friendship and **acceptance**.

"Peace be with you." That's what **Holy Week** – ALL of Jesus' life – is ALL ABOUT. The eternal Son of God had taken on our **human flesh** and blood to take our place under God's law and MAKE PEACE between God and a whole world of **rebellious sinners**. SO Jesus had lived His life – perfectly obeying FOR US **every** commandment **in every way**. SO Jesus had died – ***"the punishment that brought us PEACE was on Him,"*** Isaiah had prophesied. There on the cross Jesus endured the hell

and **died the death** WE DESERVED because of our sins. ***"It is FINISHED!"*** Jesus had shouted **in triumph** before He died. SO Jesus now lives – EVERYTHING **taken care** of. IN our risen, living Lord Jesus we HAVE THE PEACE of God's forgiveness full and free for **all** our sins – the ***"peace"*** of God's love and a whole new relationship with our Creator – the ***"peace"*** of "I'm going straight to heaven when I die and ONE DAY Jesus will raise my dead body back to life to live forever with Him in that ***'new heaven and new earth."*** The more we see that this peace is a FACT - a BLESSED REALITY - the more AT PEACE we will be.

Thomas wasn't there to SEE and HEAR all this **for himself**. ***"So the other disciples kept telling him, 'We have seen the Lord!'"*** 10+ people ALL SEEING Jesus with **their own eyes** AT ONE TIME was not good enough for Thomas. HE had to see – to touch – Jesus FOR HIMSELF and until that happened, ***"I will never believe."*** Thomas' NOT BELIEVING didn't change the FACT that Jesus **is alive** again. Thomas' stubborn unbelief ONLY ROBBED him of the ***"peace"*** and comfort of Jesus' resurrection.

WHAT GRACE Jesus showed Thomas ***"eight days later."*** Jesus could have lambasted Thomas for his ARROGANT, STUBBORN DEMANDS but instead Jesus showed **patience** and **forgiveness** – working to REMOVE ALL of Thomas' doubts. ***"Peace be with you!"*** Jesus says to all INCLUDING Thomas. Then He tells Thomas to SEE and TOUCH Him. ***"Don't continue to doubt, but believe."*** Peace flooded Thomas' heart and soul. ***"Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!"***

We have NOT PERSONALLY **seen or touched** our risen Lord but PLENTY OF OTHERS did and were convinced. ***"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed,"*** Jesus says about you and me today. BLESSED to believe Jesus is our LIVING SAVIOR we have that ***"peace of God that goes beyond all understanding."***

We have that peace and it's also…

II. Peace for us to share with the world.

"Jesus said to them, 'Just as the Father has sent Me, I am also sending you.' After saying this, He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whenever you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'"

Jesus had been sent on a DIVINE MISSION. He carried out that mission with His Father's FULL SUPPORT and BACKING. Jesus now sends us Christians on a DIVINE MISSION – to share His peace of **forgiveness** with the world. As we carry out that mission we do so with Jesus' FULL SUPPORT and **backing**. Jesus once explained it this way, ***"Whoever listens to you listens to Me. Whoever rejects you rejects Me. And whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."*** To listen to Jesus or to us as **Jesus' messengers** is to REALLY LISTEN to God the Father Himself. To refuse to listen **to Jesus** or to us as **Jesus' messengers** is to TELL GOD to **shut up** and mind His own business.

"Whenever you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven." There is no greater privilege than **telling** FEARFUL, GUILTY sinners, "**Your sins** are all forgiven BECAUSE of Jesus. He lived the perfect life for you. He died on the cross **to pay** for all your sins. He rose triumphant from the dead and promises eternal life in heaven to all who TRUST in Him. You don't need to ADD ANYTHING to what Jesus has already done FOR YOU. Jesus says to you, ***'Peace be with you!"*** Even as we share that ***"good news of peace through Jesus"*** the Holy Spirit is busy WORKING THAT PEACE in people's hearts JUST AS He has already done **for you** and **me**.

"Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." Sadly many don't see their NEED for God's forgiveness – they even WALK AWAY from it. ALL people are sinners equally deserving of God's WRATH and **rejection** – of hell's eternal **banishment** and **punishment**. Jesus came the Savior of ALL people. But there **are sinners** who refuse to repent – who are not sorry for their sins and don't

want to GIVE UP their **sinful ways**. Rather than wanting God's FORGIVENESS they expect God to "UNDERSTAND" their sin and ACCEPT their excuses. Their ATTITUDE is "**If** God doesn't like my **attitude** – that He doesn't COME FIRST in my life – the **language** I use – that I like to gossip – that I'm living with my girl/boyfriend – TOUGH LUCK. The times have changed and GOD NEEDS TO CHANGE too."

When a person has that attitude we must LOVINGLY WARN them, "You're REJECTING your only Savior and **hope** of heaven. Keep living with that STUBBORN SINFULNESS and you'll end up in hell with no one to blame but yourself. ONLY IN JESUS is there real peace and **forgiveness**." People DON'T LIKE hearing that but they'll like hell EVEN LESS. ***"God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked"*** and neither should we. The purpose of warning people is to lead them to repent so we can then share with them Jesus' ***"Peace be with you."***

III. Peace found only in God's Word.

"Jesus …did many other miraculous signs that are not written 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."

It's ONLY THROUGH His Word that God gives us Jesus' ***"peace."*** With His law – those 10 commandments – God SHOVES our sin in our face and makes us TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for our sins. Convicted and crushed by God's law the GOSPEL then points us to Jesus CRUCIFIED and NOW RISEN and says, ***"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven."***

"Written that you may believe." God's Word leads us to **believe** that Jesus is ***"the Son of God."*** God's Word leads us to confess with Thomas, ***"My Lord and my God!"*** God's Word shows us that Jesus is ***"the Christ"*** – the promised Savior who JUST AS PROMISED really has taken care of **everything** to save us. THROUGH His Word God gives us the ***"peace"*** of believing – the ***"peace"*** of BEING SURE IN JESUS that God loves us – God has forgiven all our sins – has promised us eternal life in heaven when we die – and in the meantime **God is with** us EVERY STEP of the way.

Like the disciples and Thomas we often struggle with MAKING SENSE of things. But we don't have to UNDERSTAND everything. We have God's Word WRITTEN to show us that Jesus REALLY IS ALIVE again - **written** to fill us with Jesus ***"peace"*** even when life can be in SUCH TURMOIL.

"Peace be with you." How we need to HEAR that **over and over** and to see it spoken by our RISEN, LIVING Lord Jesus. Amen.

APOSTLES' CREED

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