

Easter 2            4/19/20  
John 20:19-31    A

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, JESUS CAME AND STOOD AMONG THEM AND SAID TO THEM, "PEACE BE WITH YOU!"

Today is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Easter. In the Church Year, this Sunday has a most interesting name. This Sunday is known as "Low Sunday". No, it doesn't refer to feeling "low" because the tax man typically comes April 15<sup>th</sup>; nor "low" because of the temperatures this past week. This Sunday is called "Low" Sunday because of how the disciples felt after Easter. They were not rejoicing in the empty tomb of Easter morning. They were walking by fear, instead of faith.

It's evening of the first Easter, and, where are they? What are they doing? They are cowering in fear behind locked doors. It makes sense according to our human reason that they would be locked in behind closed doors in fear. On Thursday, the mob came to Gethsemane, arrested Jesus and dragged Him before the Council. The council charged Him with blasphemy, convicted Him on that charge, and sentenced Him to death. Then, they marched Him off to Pontius Pilate and charged Him with being in rebellion against Caesar and cried that He should be crucified. And despite the fact that Pilate could find no basis for the charge against Him, he had Him crucified. And now, they are wondering: if they did that to our Lord and Teacher, what will they do to us?

You just have to stop and consider why are they afraid? They had heard the reports of the women. Peter and John had been to the tomb and saw that it was empty. Maybe, they're afraid because Jesus is not with them. Where is He? What's He doing? Why isn't He here with us? Or,

worse, what would He say to us, if He came and knocked on the door?

Here they are, all these thoughts swirling around in their heads. The Evangelist doesn't tell us, but we can imagine what they've got to be thinking, can't we?

Look at John, the disciple Jesus loved. His mind is probably going like this, "I saw Jesus die. And right before He died, He entrusted His mother to me. My job is to take care of her. But, if I'm arrested for being one of Jesus' followers, what is going to happen to Mary?"

We could turn our gaze to Peter. He's probably thinking, "As we sat at the Passover table, Jesus said, 'They will strike the shepherd and they will all fall away.' I had boasted, 'Maybe they will, but not me, Jesus. I'm going with you – prison, death, I've got your back.'" Jesus had looked at him and said, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." Peter again blew his own horn, "Oh no, those other guys might deny you, but not me, Jesus." Hours later, Peter heard the rooster crow.

And then there's Thomas. He's not with the others when Jesus came. Maybe he's stepped out to get some fresh air, or a pizza, we don't know; we just know he's not there. This absent one is perhaps thinking, "Gee whiz. When we went to Bethany and Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, we knew His enemies were out to get Him. I stood up and bragged, 'Let's go with Him and die with Him.'" But the Garden of Gethsemane is as far as Thomas went, and he ran and hid.

And, all the rest have got to be thinking the same thing. When the going got tough, they got going – away from Jesus and they ran and hid, as they we're hiding right now.

Low Sunday. Even though Christ is risen and our greatest enemy death has lost its sting, the disciples were hiding in fear. You know all

about fear, don't you? You know what it's like to walk by fear, and not faith.

As little children we are afraid of monsters, but as we get older our fears become much more real. Our teenage years are spent wondering "What do people think of me;" fearing that bully you have to see every day in class. You go to college and fear: what am I going to do with my life? What if I don't get a job that I've spent these years studying to get? You get married, a new baby is born, and you hear those dreaded words, "something is wrong with your child".

In this time of uncertainty, fear holds us tight in its grip. Will there even be a baseball season? And questions of much greater importance than that fill our thoughts: Will I be able to have a graduation open house for my senior? Will there even be a graduation ceremony? Will my job come back? How am I going to survive without income; especially, with cattle prices being where they are? What if my aged parent or at-risk spouse becomes sick?

We know all too well what it's like to feel low. We're afraid and we hide. And we wonder what's going to happen to me? Where is Jesus, we cry? What if Jesus showed up? What would He say?

Guess what, Dear Friends in Christ, we don't have to speculate, be guided by our worst fears, because Jesus did show up. The Evangelist tells us, "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, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you' (Jn 20:19)." And He also said this, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them (Mt 18:20)." In this time of being alone, together, we are not gathered together in God's House, but we are gathered together as we live stream our worship, and Jesus is here to say to you what He said to

the fear-filled disciples on that evening of the first Easter, “Peace be with you!”

Surprising, isn't it? In your confirmation vows, you vowed to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from the Lord Jesus Christ. But, you didn't. You haven't. You sinned against Him. When He shows up, He doesn't wag his accusing finger at you; He doesn't beat you over the head with what you've done – or what you have not done. He says, “Peace be with you.”

We have to understand those words. These are not words of simple greeting. This is absolution. This is sins forgiven. That is, Jesus telling you all is forgiven. Jesus can say that to you because of what happened to Him, because what happened to Him was for you.

They took Him to the place of the skull, Golgotha. And there, they crucified Him. For six hours, He hung there, enduring God's wrath and punishment against sin, for you, in your place, even dying the death you deserved. Once He was dead, a Roman soldier shoved a spear into His side. Then His lifeless body was taken from the cross and placed in the tomb. Three days later, He came forth from that tomb to bring you the forgiveness of sins He won for you.

And He does that by His Word, “peace be with you.” He shows them His hands and side, the very wounds by which He won for them the peace of God and the forgiveness of their sins.

Thomas, the Evangelist tells us, was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them. Instead of believing the words of his fellow disciples, he doubted and remained in his fears.

Our Lord Jesus didn't want Thomas to remain in doubt and fear, so He came to Him. Our Lord Christ does not want you to walk by doubt or

remain in your fear, so He comes to you just as He did Thomas and the ten.

And that's why He's here to meet with you this morning and say to you, "Peace be with you," giving you the forgiveness of sins He won for you. And what a difference that peace makes in life – the disciples, Thomas, and yours, Dear Child of God. The disciples did not stay behind locked doors in fear. Look at the words of our Epistle reading. Even when the ruling council, the same council that sentenced Jesus to death, charged them not to tell anyone about Jesus, they went out and boldly proclaimed Christ even unto death. The forgiveness that Jesus gives, gives faith, so that we can walk by faith in the darkness of this present age, telling everyone of the hope that we have in Jesus, even in these uncertain times.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! And He is with us and He comes to us....to give us peace, that peace which the world cannot give to us and that peace that surpasses all human understanding.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.