

Trinity Lutheran Church, Gillette, WY
March 30, 2008

“Peace be with you.”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. The text for the sermon this morning comes from Gospel, which was read earlier.

“Peace be with you.” It was just an ordinary greeting, much like our greeting of “hello” or “have a good day.” Just an ordinary greeting, but on the occasion reported in our text, it had an extraordinary meaning.

The disciples were huddled together behind closed doors; afraid, scared because of the authorities. Would they arrest the disciples? Would they execute them because they had befriended the man who was killed for being a traitor and a heretic, this man Jesus? Now there was a rumor floating about that this man was alive again. Stamp out the rumor by rubbing-out the disciples; a sensible strategy. So now the disciples were huddled together in fear.

As the disciples huddle in fear, something miraculous happened. *“Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”* Then there follows in the text those incredible words: *“When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”* The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord and recognized Him as Lord by the wounds and scars on His body! It must have been frightening, to say the least, when Jesus first appeared to them when the room was locked. Days earlier, Christ was arrested and killed. Now the body of Christ is missing. Some say that robbers have stolen the body, while others have seen the resurrected Christ. Because of the thoughts of some that the body has been stolen, it

would only seem logical that it was the disciples themselves who stole the body. It could even be said that the disciples were the next on the arrest list for propagating the false teachings of Jesus. For that reason, they hid, much as you and I would hide.

This first time that Jesus speaks peace to them, He speaks in terms of forgiveness giving peace from fear. It is a joyful assurance, the presence of God, the complete opposite of fear. Yet just days ago on Good Friday, there was no peace for the disciples. All of them had left Jesus in fear, especially Peter. They were deathly afraid the Jews would come for them too. That's why the doors were locked. What is worse is now they have no leader to make them feel more secure.

What sort of fear upsets our peace? Is it fear of illness or death? Is it fear that a hidden sin might be exposed? Is it fear of anything that may go wrong in our lives? Christ returned from death to give peace from fear. He gives to us His forgiveness. He gives to us His peace. It is that peace that passes all human understanding. It is peace in Christ which only He can give. He gave it to the disciples on Maundy Thursday when He instituted His Supper and He will give that peace to you in just mere moments when you come and receive His body and blood. Christ has come to give us all peace, that peace of knowing that our sins have been forgiven.

The result from Christ's statement: peace from fear. The disciples rejoiced because their relationship was restored. We can rejoice also because we have nothing to fear because our sins are forgiven.

Startled as they were, Jesus says to them again, "*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.*" What is it that Jesus is saying to them? The Savior not only assures them of peace, but He also commissions them to announce

peace to the world. Peace comes from forgiveness of sins. It is peace between God and men through the work of Christ. It is peace of conscience to the sinner. This peace was Jesus' way of saying that these idlers were still precious – and useful – to him. Jesus' word of peace was their forgiveness, and now they had the power to share that same forgiveness with the world.

During this first meeting, the disciple Thomas was not present. When the disciples saw Thomas next, they told him how Jesus had appeared to them in the locked room. Thomas, known for his doubting, refused to believe unless he saw everything for himself.

How often are we the “Doubting Thomas?” How often do we doubt who Jesus is? How often do we doubt what is given to us in our Baptism? How often do we doubt what we receive in the Lord's Supper: the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation? The world and all that is in it will cause us to doubt. Satan will do all that he can to cause doubt in a person. If a person wavers or doubts in their belief, then Satan has won. However, Christ has given to us that forgiveness in Him. He has given to us that peace in Him. He has given to us that new life in Him. Christ has given all of this to us through His life, death, and resurrection. This is not given to us by the world. The world will leave us disappointed and wanting and needing more; Jesus will not.

To ease the fears of Thomas, Jesus tells him the same thing that He told all the other disciples: *“Peace be with you.”* Jesus doesn't stop there. He tells Thomas, *“Do not disbelieve, but believe.”* Immediately, after Thomas put his hands in the wounds of Jesus, Thomas believes.

Jesus tells you the same thing today: *“Do not disbelieve, but believe.”* We understand Thomas, don't we? We believe Jesus died and rose and even that He's given us eternal life in heaven. But do we really, always, believe that because my Redeemer lives, we will live also or do our doubts leave us with no peace?

Jesus forgave Thomas' unbelief. He returned to make Thomas whole, to give him the contentment of faith that is found only in Him. He comes today to us, to forgive us of our unbelief. We doubt. We question. We waver. But Jesus, through what He did for us on the cross, forgives us of our doubt, our questioning and our wavering. Through His gift of His body and blood, He continues to strengthen and keep you in the one true faith until life everlasting. That one true faith is found in Him.

True peace, the Bible describes it, is always a product of the restored relationship between God and man, and that is only a result of the forgiveness that Christ earned for us on the cross. The Lord brings His peace to you. He has paid the price for your sin and disobedience. Peace with God has come at a cost, but Christ has borne that cost for you. And now, He brings that peace to you.

Therefore, do not be troubled. As the risen Lord visited His disciples, so He visits you. As He spoke peace and forgiveness to them, so He speaks it to you. As He came to them with His risen body and blood, so He comes and gives you His body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. No matter what your sinful nature or circumstance might argue, you can be certain by God's grace that you are at peace with God, because you are forgiven for all of your sins. In Jesus name, amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, amen.