



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

The disciples were in the upper room. This was the same room that they had eaten the Passover meal with Jesus on His last Thursday evening. But now something was different. Jesus was not there. And the disciples were afraid. They were afraid for their lives as they had just witnessed what the religious leaders had done to Jesus. They were afraid that they might meet the same fate.

And their fear was probably rightly so. What had been done to Jesus was unthinkable. The crowd even got Pilate to help carry out their plan. The religious leader's scheme worked and Jesus' death was accomplished. And it was quite a death at that. Accused of blasphemy, the usual punishment would have been stoning, but the crowds urged on the crucifixion of Jesus what was sheer torture for our Lord. His execution in this way was horrific and shameful as well.

Going to such great lengths to get rid of Jesus gave his disciples a bad feeling, as if they could by association be the next to be tortured or even put to death. So no wonder they are afraid. No wonder they are locked in that upper room. It was totally rational to them to be fearful and to hide away out of sight, at

least until the things settled down. To be in lock down seems quite fitting for these men.

And then Jesus appeared. Just like that he was with them in that locked room. No knock on the door, no moving the deadbolts that kept them safe. Jesus just appeared. And he simply says, "Peace be with you." What a greeting that was, as He showed them his hands and his side. Then in that instant the disciples rejoice to see their Lord. They are excited to have Him with them again in that upper room. But Jesus repeats himself, "Peace be with you." He wants to make sure that these men are calm, so he can give them a most astonishing gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus continues and says, as the Father has sent me, so I send you." He then breathes the Holy Spirit on them. What a moment! They receive the Spirit of God right from the breath of Jesus.

So many things had happened to these men in the last few weeks. Just image what they all saw Jesus do and say, even before his notorious death on the cross. And now they see more. Jesus is alive. He had come back to them. And brings with him a gift, a great gift for all time; the Holy Spirit. I for one cannot even imagine how they must have felt. Maybe relief, maybe joy, and maybe still some confusion. But it was Jesus who was with them in their locked upper room. It was Jesus that said, "Peace be with you."

As the story continues, we are not told if the disciples leave the room or continue to be locked away, but somehow Thomas was missing on that Easter night when Jesus came to the 10 men. They, however, share the good news of Jesus being alive with Thomas. Quite the downer when Thomas says that he will not believe them until he sees for himself.

And now a week later, it was the Sunday after Easter, just like today, when Jesus appeared again in that upper room and this time Thomas was present. Jesus begins with the same greeting as last week, "Peace be with you." He addresses Thomas and he encourages him to touch and see the marks on his hands and side. Then Jesus tells Thomas, "Do not doubt, but believe." And Thomas does just that. With a sign of relief, Thomas acknowledges that it is in fact Jesus when he says, "My Lord and my God." It seems that Thomas is now a believer as well. He has seen with his own eyes that Jesus is alive! And so we have Doubting Thomas Sunday.

In all reality, it think it probably should be called Doubting Disciple Sunday. I am sure that all 11 of these men had some doubts. Just as I am pretty sure that even today we have doubts as well. The disciples were afraid, they are

worried and they are scared. All the same reasons that we doubt as well. We worry about our futures. We worry that something bad will happen. We have doubts and we roll them around in our minds.

Last Monday night we had a terrific storm in Butternut. As I lay in bed it seemed like a Fourth of July show outside my window. The lightening and thunder were very close. I even got up to unplug my computer, after the lights flickered the first time. What would happen? Would damaging hail be next? Would we need to get up and get the generator running so as not to let the sump crock overflow into the basement? And so I snuggled under the blanket and prayed that we would be safe and the storm would soon be gone. It was very frightening.

How many of you have ever been fearful and been locked down or hunkered down? I think that we have all experienced a bit of that over the last year with COVID-19 knocking at our door. Too many of us have felt trapped in our homes, unable to live life normally. We were fearful to go to see our grandkids. We were scarred for our own health. We just didn't know what would happen with this pandemic.

When I first came to Christ the Servant, we had a senior Bible study on Friday mornings at 11:00 a.m. It was a most wonderful group of faith filled folks that I really admired. But they too had doubts. They, just about every week we met, expressed their fear and doubt that they would really be good enough, have enough faith, to get to heaven with Jesus. And folks, these were some of the most wonderful Christians, I have come to know. But they doubted that they could ever be good enough to be with Jesus.

And so the disciples were human too. They had good reason to fear, to be scarred and to doubt. But think with me about what happened to change that. Jesus came to them with the words, "Peace be with you." And they began to doubt their doubts if you will. They believed Jesus instead of believing their doubts. Jesus spoke peace and it happened. Peace came over those disciples, Thomas too! God's words are powerful. Remember creation? God spoke and it happened. The world came alive. And God still speaks Peace to us today. God's words are not just that. They are truth. God's word always accomplishes what it says. So "Peace be with you."

And so we too hear these words and we have peace. Not just the peace that brings rest and quiet. But true inner peace, God's peace. We have Jesus himself. He will appear to us just as He did to those disciples locked away in

that upper room. In fact, I am sure that you have heard me say that every Sunday is a mini Easter. When we count the days of Lent, we don't count Sunday because they are all little Easters of their own. Easter where Jesus is truly present. Easter where Jesus is alive. Easter where Jesus tells us "Do not doubt but believe".

And so what about our fear? What about our doubts? Yes, we will still have doubts and fears, but we no longer have to believe them because we believe Jesus instead. We may not know what tomorrow will bring. We may not know when the storms or pandemics in our life will end. But what we do know is that God gives us His peace. It is a peace that knows what will happen on the last day. Because we believe that Christ was crucified, died and was buried only to rise on the third day, we are given the forgiveness of our sins, suppression of our worries, calming of our fears. We are certain that we will have new life with Him in heaven on our last day. As our creed says, He will come again in glory. He will come in glory bringing in the fullness of His kingdom forever.

Yes, good friends. We have Christ as our savior. We can exchange our doubts for His true peace. For Christ has died. Christ has risen. And Christ will come again. **AMEN**

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.