

4/28/2019

“Blessed Are Those Who Believe”

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Second Sunday in Easter

Theme: When we trust and believe in Jesus Christ, we are blessed with Christ’s peace, the assurance of our salvation, and eternal life!

John 20:19-31 (NIV)

¹⁹ *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”* ²⁰ *After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.* ²¹ *Again Jesus said, “**Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**”* ²² *And with that he breathed on them and said, “**Receive the Holy Spirit.**”* ²³ ***If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.**”*

²⁴ *Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.* ²⁵ *So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”* *But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”* ²⁶ *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “**Peace be with you!**”* ²⁷ *Then he said to Thomas, “**Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.**”* ²⁸ *Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”* ²⁹ *Then Jesus told him, “**Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**”*

³⁰ *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.* ³¹ *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

† **The Risen Christ meets us where we are.**

Now I have to confess that I’ve never seen Jesus in his resurrected bodily form. I have never put my hand in his pierced side. And yet I, like many or all of you, can say that I am blessed in believing that Jesus is alive.

I can also say that I have experienced and felt the presence of the risen Christ. And that is because Jesus does come and meet us where we are. Just as he entered the closed room

with locked doors where the disciples had gathered after his death, Jesus comes to us. Wherever we might be anxiously waiting for what might happen to us or those we love, Jesus comes to us.

We may have fears and worries that keep us awake at night. But Jesus will enter into the dark and wearied places of our hearts and minds. Christ will meet us in our most difficult times and struggles wherever we are. And when we gather to worship, we can believe and expect Jesus to be with us and among us!

† **The Risen Christ offers peace.**

As John tells us as an eye witness, Jesus arrives among a group of disciples who are scared for their lives; they have every right to be. They saw their leader crucified and are concerned that they might be next. It is perfectly understandable for them to feel scared, anxious, and nervous—anything but peaceful.

Then Jesus appears and greets them by saying, “*Shalom alechem*”, “***Peace be with you.***” It was a common greeting among rabbis of Jesus’ time. Jesus himself had instructed the seventy he sent to villages before him to first “Peace be to this house.” upon entering. (Luke 10:5)

And yet, the disciples of Jesus knew it as much more than that. His words of peace calmed the storms of the Sea of Galilee as their boat was rocked by waves. With Jesus, comes peace. I imagine that the disciples felt better once they saw that what was before them was not a ghost, nor a figment of imagination. Before them was Jesus; and to be in the presence of Jesus is to experience a “peace that surpasses all understanding.”

Friends, I can surely tell you that I have experienced that kind of peace, just knowing without bodily seeing, that Jesus is with me. I suppose I really first experienced it when I was a child and did not know if my mother would survive cancer, though I don’t think I really knew what it was. It was about that time I really put my trust in Him.

How about you? What event or series of events made you a believer? How can you connect to those moments in difficult times of unbelief??

† **The Risen Christ shares power and purpose!**

One other thing I want to point out from our scripture story today. It is that the Risen Christ shares power and purpose.

Remember what he said to those who were gathered the first evening of his resurrection . . . ***“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*** Jesus commissions his disciple as apostles, those who are sent -- to leave their place of comfort, security, and even fear – to go forth and share their witness of the good news with others. He gave them new, or renewed purpose. To be messengers and bearers of God’s love.

And along with that purpose he gave them power – power to accomplish that for which they are sent. He breathed on them and said, ***“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*** We, too, can offer God’s peace, love, mercy and forgiveness in Christ’s name.

This is why it is a part of our coming together in worship – for any who would put their trust and faith in the saving grace of Jesus. And this is why we can forgive one another in his name, just as we have received that forgiveness ourselves.

And our actions of extending God’s love and mercy can go far beyond words. We can show God’s love and allow the Spirit of the risen Christ to live in and through our actions; as I know many of you do through our ministries here and in your daily lives elsewhere.

Now that we have the peace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, what action(s) are we being called to do? In what ways can you live your life as proof to others that Christ is alive?

Would anyone like to share a witness today about these blessings of believing?

May God continue to bless you who have believed in the risen Christ Jesus our Lord! And for any this day who would like to do so now, simply pray with me . . . “Lord Jesus, I confess my sins and turn to you. Come into my heart and into my life. I welcome you as savior and Lord. Thanks and praise to God! Amen.”

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Questions for Reflection:

What event or series of events made you a believer? How can you connect to those moments in difficult times of unbelief??

When you gather on the first day of the week, like the disciples did in this passage, what is your purpose for gathering? Do you expect Jesus to show up?

Now that we have the peace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, what action(s) are we being called to do? In what ways can you live your life as proof to others that Christ is alive?