

Easter 2

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

PEACE BE WITH YOU! The gospel brings us good news of great joy! PEACE BE WITH YOU! The risen Lord declared to all the world, in that first Eastertide, that there is peace.

Yet in the Gospel today we hear that the disciples knew no peace. Rather, they were terribly afraid, and hiding behind locked doors hoping the Jews would forget about them. And something more terrifying had come through the locked, solid door and was standing before them. Was it a ghost? Was it a heavenly vision? Mary Magdalene had told them that she had seen the risen Lord in the Garden on Easter morn, but Thomas and the rest had doubted. Now, the risen Lord was among them and they quailed with fear.

And then those words, "PEACE BE WITH YOU!" Here are words of comfort, but greater still, a declaration of victory. The disciples had deserted

him in his hour of need, left him to die alone on the cross, yet he stands among them, reconciling them to himself with gentle words of peace. There is nothing left to fear, the Master has returned.

But more than this, Jesus' words are a declaration of victory. Jesus does not hope for peace, nor wish that the disciples have peace. He does not say to his quaking disciples, "MAY peace be with you." No, in this passage in the Gospel of John, the Greek text shows us that Jesus proclaims to his followers that he has brought peace to them. He says to them, "PEACE BE WITH YOU!"

If Jesus declares peace, there must have been a war, for what good would Jesus' peace be if there were no conflict. Do diplomats gather to sign peace treaties between their nations if there have been no hostilities? Certainly not! If there is a peace treaty, there must have been a war. A peace treaty says that the defeated people ask for leniency, and the victors agree that they will not utterly destroy their opponents. It is the victor who grants peace, the defeated can only hope for mercy. Jesus Christ offers peace because he has won the war. The battle was joined at Calvary. The battle raged fiercely outside the walls of Jerusalem. He defeated sin and Satan, and released his people from bondage. Jesus reports the outcome of the battle to his doubting disciples, and the report is peace. They cannot

doubt any longer, because they have been redeemed, they have been freed by their conquering Lord.

Remember the words of the book of the Prophet Isaiah, " How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns". " The warrior had gone out to battle, and all creation waited for three days. Even the disciples, who had known him for so long had given up hope. But he returned to their locked room to bring good tidings, and to publish peace.

But it was a costly battle, and our redemption was not bought without a great price. As proof of his peace, what does Jesus show his disciples? He shows them his hands and his side. "How beautiful are the feet of him who brings good tidings of peace." And what of Jesus' feet, the feet bringing the divine message of peace? Are they beautiful feet? Those feet that were ripped and torn by the nails of the cross; are they beautiful? Those feet that were so bruised while crushing the head of the Devil; are they beautiful? And what of Jesus' pierced side? How beautiful is the broken body of the Lord from which poured blood and water, that sign of the most holy Eucharist? How beautiful are his wounded hands, the hands that were pierced with nails? The hands that ripped down the gates of Hell and bound

sin and Satan forever; are they not the most beautiful hands? He showed his disciples his feet, his side, his hands as proof that he had fought the war and had returned as champion to proclaim peace.

Dear friends, we with the disciples come this day to worship the victorious Christ! The very Jesus who died on the cross is the same Jesus who stood before them, and showed them his scars. The disciples saw those scars and believed in him, the exalted Son of God. The disciples, inspired by the Holy Spirit, burst from their retreat of dreary doubt, to spread the news of those scars and the living Lord who bore them. We have that apostolic faith, not because we have seen Jesus' scars with our eyes, but rather seen them with the eyes of faith.

Brothers and sisters, we worship the victorious Christ. We do not worship him because he was born of Mary, greeted by angels, surrounded by shepherds. We do not worship him because he was beaten and nailed to the cross to die, surrounded by scoffers and sinners. Though all these are worthy of glory and praise, they would be worthless if Jesus Christ had not defeated death and Satan by rising victorious from the grave. We worship Jesus Christ as God Almighty because he sprang from the cold tomb, triumphant over his enemies, to proclaim peace to the world, and salvation to all men.

The battle is over! Jesus has freed us and given us eternal life thru the wounds he suffered for our sake, and rising again, ruling at the right hand of God the Father.

In the words of the great hymn by Charles Wesley:

Those dear tokens of his passion still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation to his ransomed worshippers; with
what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture gaze we on
those glorious scars!

So we, like the disciples, have gathered in a room together hoping for peace. And Jesus comes among us this day, not far away, but near to us, bidding us peace. Do you look to him for peace, or do you seek peace elsewhere? Does your peace come from your job or your family? Perhaps there are children here who look for peace by being more popular in school or their friends? Are there those who have come to Church this morning who look for peace in alcohol, drugs or sex? All of these, each in their own way, offer peace and comfort, but can never supply it. Just at the moment that peace should come it vanishes like the mist in the hot summer sun. There is no peace without faith in Jesus Christ, because he is the one who has won peace.

Would you like peace in your life? Then you must repent of your sin, believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and you must follow him in peace.

Fathers, you must love your wives like Christ loved the Church, even to die for her. You must be patient with your children, a living example of Christ in the homes. Wives, do not fight and argue with your husbands, but build Christ's peace in you homes. Children obey your parents, not out of fear, but knowing that God has made peace with you by giving you loving parents. You see, dear friends that we cannot believe in Jesus and receive the gift of his peace, and then fail to bring our homes and finally the whole world to love and serve him.

So, now that we have received with faith the peace of Christ, let us worship and praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.