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Our Saviour Lutheran Church  
Easter 2  
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Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O God, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. AMEN.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, peace is commodity that is hard to come by.

It is NOT a product that appears on store shelves.

You won't see it on sold on Amazon.

No marketing company is advertising "peace."

And it is NOT listed on the Stock Exchange.

No peace is a commodity that is hard to come by.

Now, true there are companies that produce and sell anti-anxiety and depression medications, that are meant to foster emotional well-being and serenity.

And there are companies that will sell you insurance policies, that are meant to bring peace of mind in the face of possible catastrophe.

But that is not the same as knowing the peace of God.

No, peace is a commodity that is hard to come by.

And how do we even define peace?

For some, peace is the absence of war.

For some, peace is experiencing a sense of calm and tranquility in the midst of life.

For some, peace is harmony and good will among people.

For some, peace is law and order.

For some, peace is a quiet mind, without worry and fear.

For some, peace is financial security.

For some, peace is a sleeping baby.

For some, peace is a view of the ocean, a beautiful sunset, or the stillness of the woods.

Yes, peace is a commodity that is hard to come by, and it is different for different people, we tend to differ with respect to a definition of peace.

PAUSE

Now, today, in our Gospel reading we come up against the definition of peace from the perspective of Jesus our Lord.

Today, our Gospel reading offers an understanding of peace from Jesus' viewpoint.

The passage in John 20, from which we just read, begins with the words, "When it was evening on that day..."

That day, being the first Easter Sunday.

Jesus has been raised, the women had appeared at the tomb earlier that same day.

And now, it is evening on Easter.

And where do we find the disciples but locked away in a house.

They are locked away because they are fearful of the Jews.

They are fearful that what had happened to Jesus could very well happen to them.

But the disciples might also be locked away because they are also fearful of Jesus.

The disciples had heard that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

And as much as we think that that would be good news for the disciples, it is also likely that the disciples were fearful that the risen Lord would come to bring some punishment upon the disciples.

Why? Because, remember, the disciples had denied and abandoned Jesus at his most desperate hour.

The disciples had forsaken Jesus when he was arrested.

They stood by when Jesus was crucified.

Jesus' friends, those who had followed him for three years, during Jesus' earthly ministry, up and left Jesus at the most critical moment of his life.

And so, the disciples were probably not just fearful of the Jews, they were also fearful of Jesus, and so they locked themselves away in some house.

And it is then, it is on this first Easter evening that Jesus comes to his disciples.

And what does Jesus say?

"How dare you abandon me?"

"How dare you forsake me?"

"How dare you call yourselves my disciples?"

No, Jesus says, of all things, "Peace be with you."

And just so to show the disciples that it is truly himself, Jesus shows them his wounds.

Jesus shows them his hands where nails had been driven in, and he shows them his side where he had been pierced by a spear.

These are the identifying markers of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

But, I think Jesus also shows the disciples his wounds, so as to say to the disciples, "See, this is what I suffered, no thanks to you."

But after showing the disciples his wounds, Jesus then says again to the disciples, "Peace be with you."

In fact, in this passage, Jesus says "Peace be with you," three times to the disciples.

So, this passage really, really, really wants to emphasize God's peace in Jesus Christ.

PAUSE

And, in this way, I think we are to understand that as a commodity, "peace" derives ultimately from God in Jesus Christ.

No, you don't find "peace" on store shelves, or on Amazon, or on the trading floor of the Stock Exchange.

Peace as a commodity is hard to come by.

But, we will find peace in God's Son Jesus Christ.

PAUSE

And what is peace from the perspective of Jesus?

What is Jesus' definition of peace?

Peace is reconciliation. Peace is a right relationship.

And, in truth, many of the other definitions we might have for "peace" boil down to reconciliation or right relationship.

Peace is the absence of war—it is then the reconciliation between nations.

Peace is a quiet mind, without worry and fear—it is then the right relationship with one's self.

Peace is an ocean view, a beautiful sunset, or the stillness of the woods—it is then the reconciliation of humanity and creation.

Peace is law and order—it is then the right relationship between individuals and society as a whole.

There are indeed many facets, many definitions of peace, but ultimately peace is reconciliation and right relationship.

And, when the crucified and risen Lord Jesus comes and stands before his disciples and says to them, "Peace be with you," what Jesus is truly emphasizing is that peace is reconciliation and right relationship.

Most especially and before everything else, peace is reconciliation and right relationship with God.

That is what Jesus is revealing on that first Easter evening.

That is why Jesus says, "Peace," to his disciples.

Even after Jesus has suffered a most awful and humiliating death...

Even after Jesus' crucifixion, where his hands and feet were nailed to a cross, and where he was pierced by a spear...

Even after all that, Jesus is still able to say to his disciples, "Peace be with you."

In truth Jesus is saying to his disciples, "Let us be reconciled. Let us be in right relationship with one another."

PAUSE

But, we all know, that that is no small endeavor—that is, to be reconciled, especially with other people with whom reconciliation seems all but impossible.

We can all think of various situations from history.

The Jewish captives and their Nazi persecutors.

African slaves and American plantation owners.

Native Americans and English colonists.

From contemporary times, we might think of the Ukrainian people and the Russian invaders.

On a more personal level, there is estrangement in families.

There is substance abuse that upends lives.

There is infidelity that divides families.

There is indeed any number of situations by which people are alienated from one another.

And reconciliation and right relationship between individuals and peoples is not easy.

PAUSE

But, what we can take from Jesus' example in this Gospel reading is very helpful.

For notice again, Jesus displays his wounds to the disciples.

And yes, it could be because Jesus is identifying himself to the disciples.

And yes, it could be that Jesus is scorning his disciples so as to say "Look at my wounds, no thanks to you."

But there is still a third possibility, I believe, as to why Jesus reveals his wounds.

Jesus could be showing his wounds to his disciples to show them his vulnerability, to show them his humanity.

For the truth of the matter is, we can't experience reconciliation and right relationship if we never knew there was some wrong that was done.

So by showing his wounds to his disciples he is saying, "You need to know that I have suffered by your actions. I am vulnerable, I am human."

"I suffered by of your fear, your indifference. I suffered because you abandoned me."

It is not spite then, but truth, that motivates Jesus to reveal his wounds to his disciples.

Yes, we need to know the hurt we cause in a relationship, so there can be an honest and sincere reconciliation.

But, again, to reveal our wounds is not easy, because it means that we reveal our vulnerability to another, and who knows if that other will even respond with compassion, or will scoff at us.

There is a risk that is taken when we reveal our vulnerability.

PAUSE

But this is the example of peace that Jesus gives us in this Gospel reading.

Jesus is the one who takes the risk and reveals his vulnerability.

Jesus shows the disciples his wounds and then he says, "Let there be peace among us."

Three times Jesus sues for peace.

PAUSE

But interestingly enough, Jesus already seems to be at peace.

To be sure, Jesus really doesn't say, "Let there be peace among us."

No, instead, Jesus says, "Peace be with you."

It is as if Jesus is already at peace by simply showing his wounds, by making the case of his own personal vulnerability.

And perhaps, there is a lesson to be learned here as well.

That even if we don't receive the reconciliation we hope with another, there is still peace to be found by our taking the risk to make ourselves vulnerable before another, by showing our wounds.

Jesus is already at peace, and wishes only for his disciples to be at peace by reconciling with him.

Jesus is giving them a gift, if the disciples and us are only willing to accept it.

PAUSE

Yes, Friends, peace is a commodity that is hard to come by, it is something of sundry definitions.

Today, in our gospel reading, we witness Jesus' understanding of peace, which is to be reconciled, to be in right relationship, first and foremost with God.

And as people of God, part of who we are and what we are to be about, is wrapped up in this commodity of peace.

We are peddlers of peace in the world. This is our commodity, this is our product, this is the goods we are peddling, distributing out in the world.

Even as Jesus has bestowed his peace upon us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

