

**Peace be with You**  
**April 7, 2024**

**Our Savior is Way Lutheran Church**

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*Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!*

If you received an email from me over the past 10 years, you most likely would have read the words, “Peace be with you” just before my name at the end of the email. Why? Because as a Christian Pastor, I want to convey our Lord’s words to you and to those who read my emails.

But, if you looked up the word *peace* in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, you would not quite find what I meant when I use the word *peace*, because the dictionary defines it as ,“a state of tranquility or quiet”, which could lead you in all kinds of directions—freedom from civil disturbance, or freedom from disquieting, or oppressive thoughts or emotions—these are not quite what I have in mind.

What I have in mind when I type these words comes with more of a biblical understanding, one that is better associated with the words, *reconciliation, well-being, relationship, wholeness, redemption, and new life*, which seems to me a little different. But with this perspective, I believe that there is a greater understanding of the bond of peace that comes from the forgiveness that we share.

In our Gospel reading for this morning, we heard that “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

While the disciples might have heard that Jesus rose from the dead, that was not what they were focused on. After what we call Good Friday, they were living in fear. Each one of them had left Jesus. While Peter tried to stay close to Jesus, even he ended up denying Jesus three times. Fear had taken hold of them.

Just like the disciples, fear can take hold of us at times as well. Some of us can fear death, maybe after a fall or when we are sick. Some of us fear that some hidden sin of ours might be revealed. Some of us fear that they might fail, either at work or in life. And some of us can fear not having enough money.

His disciples were afraid of what the Jews might do next. Then, Jesus stood among them, showing them His hands and side. He said, “Peace be with you...” He could have been disappointed and angry with them for leaving Him when He needed them most. He could have tried to get even with them for thinking only of themselves as they left Him to hang on the cross, or rebuke them for not focusing on the right things time and time again. But instead, He showed them His hands and side, and said, “Peace be with you...” that they might know the joy of His forgiveness and love.

And yet, Jesus has to say it again. “Peace be with you.” He says, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” So that they might truly know the peace that He came to give was from God Himself, because it is in this peace that we are reconciled with God once again, that not only would we be in a healthy relationship with Him but also with one another. Even though the disciples had conflicting thoughts running through their heads, they felt helpless and numb. They were almost paralyzed by Jesus’ death. That is why instead of going out and boldly sharing the lessons they had learned from Jesus out into the world, they had gathered together behind locked doors.

There is a whole world outside of these walls that needs to hear, the lessons that we have learned from Jesus. When we do nothing, when we allow our own conflicting thoughts and consciences to nag at us, we no longer have the peace that Jesus came to bring. So, He comes to us and speaks to us His Words that bring *peace from above*, that we might share that peace with a world that is in desperate need of it. It is not some kind of numbness or idleness thinking about oblivion. It is a peace that comes from forgiveness, especially to those who feel helpless in their sins, a peace that we and others might know that they too are forgiven and loved by God.

Because, if you recall, Jesus says “Peace with you” a third time in our Gospel reading. This time He shares these words with Thomas, the one who needs forgiveness from his doubts and unbelief. While many of the disciples were rejoicing that Jesus had appeared, Thomas had not been there with them when He appeared to them. He wanted to believe and rejoice with them in fellowship, but Thomas was still conflicted by his doubts and unbelief. And it brought about a kind of isolation. He must have felt alone with them, not quite believing that Jesus died and rose again. That someday, he too might receive eternal life.

Sometimes doubt and unbelief can creep into our own thoughts at times, leaving us with little to no peace at all. We may doubt that Jesus will truly provide for all that we need. We may find it difficult to believe that Jesus will continue to guide you, and take away the anxiety that you are feeling about today and tomorrow.

The Scripture says, “Eight days later, [when] His disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. [And] although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” He says to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe....”

You see, Jesus even came back to forgive Thomas for his doubt and unbelief. And when Thomas listened to what Jesus said, not only did his doubt and unbelief go away, but he was filled with joy. He confessed, “My Lord and my God!” But Jesus replies, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” That’s us!

Jesus has blessed us with His Spirit who helps us to believe, even though we have not seen. The words, “Peace be with you” are words that Jesus uses to bring us together in forgiveness and fellowship with God. And so, what do we usually say? “...and also with you...” because they are words that transcend fear, doubt and unbelief, so that we might continue to hold on to things like *reconciliation*, *well-being*, *relationship*, *wholeness*, *redemption*, and *new life* that He came to bring us.

There is no reason to allow fear, worry, and doubt to consume us because God takes care of us, in a way that we can live secure in restored relationship with Him, rejoicing in His forgiveness and love, which enables us to share His peace with those around us. So, Peace be with you, (and also with you)...until He comes again to take us all home to be with Him forever.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.