

March 30th, 2008 – 2nd Sunday of Easter –
Peace be with You
Pastor Scott Hirssig

“¹⁹On 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.” (John 20:19 ESV)

He is Risen!..... (*congregation responds, "He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!"*)

I greet you with grace, mercy and peace from God, our Father, and Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit, who lives within us as believers, empowering us.

In our world today and throughout history, there are many people who long for peace, who wish hostilities would end, and who hope that there will be building for our future. According to Jesus, not only will hostilities be in the world, but they will increase before the final judgment. Jesus spoke of the last days - the time just before the end, and His return, saying,

“⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.” (Matthew 24:6-7 ESV)

The wars will continue and increase in the last days. Individual sin will also increase. Paul wrote to Timothy, saying,

“¹But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness but denying its power. Avoid such people.” (2 Timothy 3:2 ESV)

If that was not enough, James warns Christians that it can even happen in the lives of God's people, saying,

“¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says,

"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:1-7 ESV)

There is a battle in your life as a believer. How are you going to live? Paul wrote to believers in 1st Thessalonians about how sudden Jesus' coming will be, and it will come at the very time people believe that there is peace and security. Paul says,

"²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." (1st Thessalonians 5:2-3 ESV)

As we think about these things, we know that sin has separated mankind from God, from each other, and from the future God wants for you. In our despair, Jesus comes with peace. He comes to you right now - just like in our lesson as he came to the disciples. In our lesson, John tells us about that first Easter Sunday. Already that day, Jesus has appeared to Mary Magdalene, (Mark 16:9), to the other women, (Matthew 28:8-9), to Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5), to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and at the meal afterwards (Luke 24:13—31). Now, Jesus appears to the apostles without Thomas, (John 20:19-24). Jesus has risen from the dead. He has defeated our greatest enemy, death. He comes and says, **"Peace be with you"** (John 20:19 ESV). Peace be with you. He brings peace. He brings peace to you. Our God has brought His grace, His mercy, and His peace.

Remember that grace is unmerited favor; it is what we do not deserve, earn, merit, or work for. It takes the sinner from guilt to acquittal, from a verdict of guilty to not guilty, from punishment to freedom. Grace deals with the cause of our condition, and mercy deals with the condition. Mercy takes you from the trouble in this life to eternal glory. He even brings mercy in many ways in this life as we travel to the time of the glory to come. Peace deals with the barrier between Holy God and mankind as a result of sin that is inherited from your parents, as you, too, sin. There is reconciliation with God when mankind is redeemed by becoming a new creation. Then, mankind, through peace, is ready for heaven by being made perfect. The first point of our lesson is to understand this: peace comes from Jesus.

God spoke to Isaiah in the Old Testament,

"⁶For to us a child is born to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end..." (Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV)

This is Jesus who fulfills the law for us and ushers in the new kingdom, where He, the King, rules. This starts for you as the King comes into your heart, as the Kingdom comes to you, where the King rules. He brings the message through the means of grace, such as God's word, Baptism, and Communion. It is Jesus who brings peace. There is peace from God that comes through salvation, and there is peace from God that comes through our Christian living.

Peace with God...

Paul told the Romans in Chapter 5,

“¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1 ESV)

We are justified and saved from sin and guilt. The justice of God was satisfied on a cross, as Jesus took our place, so peace and the forgiveness of sins was made possible and offered as a gift for all. The call goes out to all to receive the gift of salvation. Jesus says in John 14,

“²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” John 14:27 (ESV)

Jesus brings peace, not like the world seeks after and tries to give, but true peace, eternal peace. It is from God and cannot be produced by the world or by your effort. Jesus comes in His 1st Advent by dying and bringing peace. He comes now bringing that peace to the human heart. In his 2nd Advent (at His future coming), he will be setting up the new kingdom, the everlasting peace. But right now, as believers, we are to live in the peace of God that Jesus brings.

Peace of God....

Kingdom living is happening right now as the God of peace lives in you and with you so that you may live in peace and have a living peace. Paul told the Romans,

“¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Romans 15:13 (ESV)

You are believing and trusting in Christ for your salvation and living in that peace. You are trusting each day as He comes in His word, baptism, and communion. Paul prays for those believers by proclaiming that God desires peace for them and also for us, saying,

“³³May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” (Romans 15:33 ESV)

Amen means, "may it be so." Paul proclaimed how this happens, saying,

“⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9 ESV)

Your kingdom living and the blessings from God right now come as He lives in you by putting into practice God's Word. To the Thessalonians, Paul declares,

“²³Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” (1st Thessalonians 5:23 ESV)

This "living in peace" is also in the letter to the Hebrews in Chapter 13:

“²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20 ESV)

May this reality be in your life as well, living in the peace that Jesus brings to you.

– Peace be with you.

In His name we pray. AMEN.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

AMEN.